

JANUARY • • 1914

SMITH'S

MAGAZINE




Portrait by
F. H. H. H.

HOLIDAY NUMBER

WOMEN'S STORIES

The New Magazine for the Intelligent Woman of To-day

 TO your news dealer as soon as you read this and ask him for a copy of *Women's Stories*. Probably you have never before this found a magazine that expressed at once your ideals, your thoughts and the kind of fiction you like best. We never had, and that is one reason why we started *Women's Stories*. You will find that it is your magazine, not a collection of special articles and opinionated editorials, with a little milk-and-water fiction, and much household lore and fashions.

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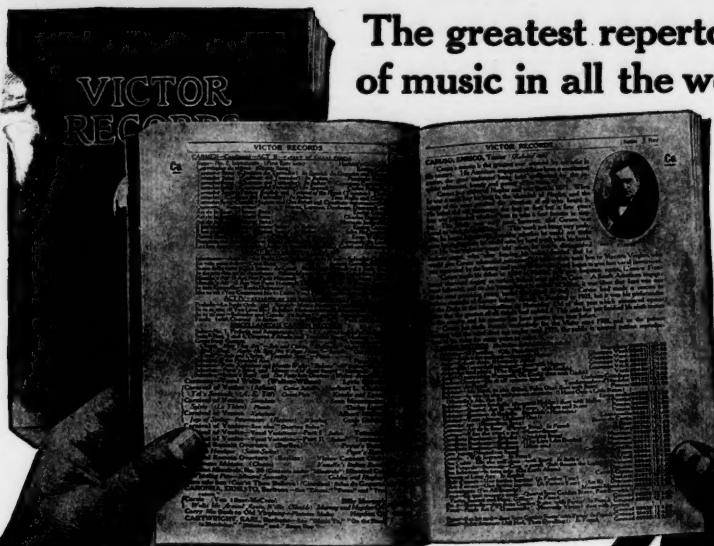
In a word, we are trying to represent the wider world of women's interests in the form of fiction, and the names of the authors who write for *Women's Stories* are distinctly a guaranty of workmanship, power and truth in the telling. People like Alfred Noyes, Margarita Spalding Gerry, R. W. Child, Mary Cholmondeley, Herman Whitaker and Mary Roberts Rinehart wrote the first number, and the standard they set has not fallen off since then. A novelette in that number, by Jane Stone, is a good sample of the kind of thing *Women's Stories* stands for—clean-cut stories with ideas back of them—not preaching reform essays, but living fiction.

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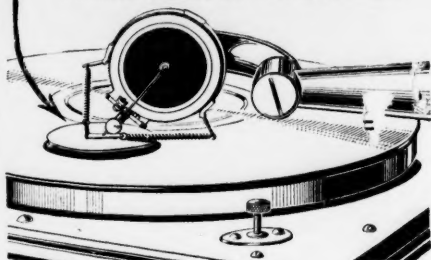
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Vol. XVIII

SMITH'S MAGAZINE

No. 4

A PUBLICATION FOR THE HOME

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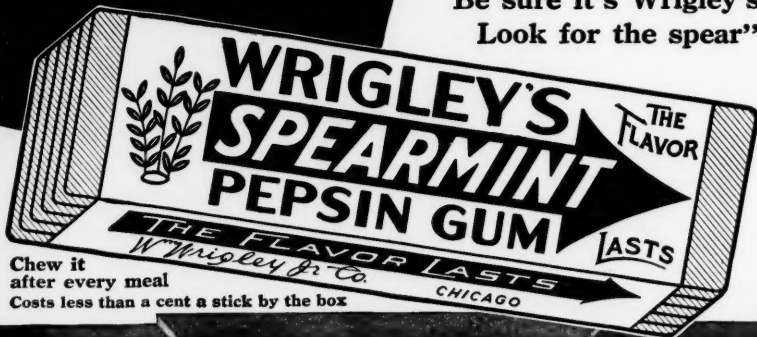
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Look for the spear"**



**Chew it
after every meal
Costs less than a cent a stick by the box**

SMITH'S MAGAZINE

VOLUME 18

JANUARY, 1914

NUMBER 4

Little Merry Christmas

By Winifred Arnold

Author of "Mis' Bassett's Matrimony Bureau," "Mrs. Radigan's Picnic," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY R. EMMETT OWEN

CHAPTER I.

HERE'S a package for you, Hime," yelled the burly conductor. "Brown, with a red label on top. I'll just set it here till you haul down the mail bags."

The station master's lantern stopped bobbing for a moment.

"All right. Set it down inside," he shouted, over his shoulder. "Snow's so deep to-night I might lose it on the platform."

The little girl in the brown coat and the hat with the big red bow on top, giggled delightedly.

"He'll think it's lost sure enough," she said. "'Twould be a fine April Fool if it wasn't so near Christmas, wouldn't it?"

"A-number-one," agreed the big conductor appreciatively. "Well, good-by, sissy; the train's moving. Hope you'll have a fine time."

"Oh, I shall," responded the little girl confidently. "I always do. Good-by. Oh, look! He's coming!"

Down the platform bobbed the station master's lantern, the center of a moving vortex of big, fluffy snowflakes. After the darkness outside, even the dimly lighted little waiting room seemed dazzling as he stepped inside, dragging the mail bags behind him.

"Where's the bundle Sim Coles left?" he demanded of the little group

assembled around the tall, whitewashed stove, slinging his burden at the feet of the village bus driver, who stood with one foot on the ledge around the bottom of the stove, while he slapped his wet mittens against its glowing sides.

"Sim Coles never came in here," answered a tall man with a black beard. "He was talkin' outside with a little gal."

"Likely he's hove it into a snow-drift," grumbled the station master, turning back toward the door. "Should think he might uv——"

A little brown figure sprang out of the shadows.

"No, he didn't," she contradicted gleefully. "I'm the brown package, you know, and the bow on my hat is the red label. He said it for a joke."

For a moment the group around the stove stared—then they joined in the merry peal of laughter that was shaking the red label.

"So you're the package, be ye?" inquired the station master. "Waal, where are you bound for, sissy? Come on up and let's read that fancy tag of yours."

The little girl bubbled appreciatively.

"I've come to visit my uncle," she explained. "That is, he's mother's uncle. Mr. Lemuel Perkins."

"Is Lem expectin' of you?" inquired



"Where's the bundle Sim Coles left?" he demanded of the little group assembled around the stove.

the bus driver, leisurely picking up a mail bag from the floor.

"Oh, no. Isn't it fun? I'm a real Christmas surprise, you know, sent early, so as not to overload the mail."

She laughed again.

"Well, I guess you'd better ride along up with me, then. Lem lives just a little piece beyond the post office."

"Oh, goody!" exclaimed the delighted passenger, with a breezy little rush across the room to the other door.

"This will be my second sleigh ride, and I can drop right down on him out of a snowstorm, just the way a Christmas surprise ought to. May I sit on the front seat with you, Mr.—er—"

"Bennett," supplied that gentleman genially. "Drove the Oatka Center bus ever since there was a deepo to drive to. Say, who was your mother, sissy? Did she ever live here?"

"Not exactly. Her name was Ellen Rumball, till she married father and went to India to live. She used to visit Uncle Lemuel and Aunt Nancy, before Aunt Nancy died."

"Why, pshaw now! She ain't the El-

len Rumball that married a missionary named Christian, is she?"

"Christie," corrected the small person. "We're all missionaries, and live in India. Father and mother and me and the children. Only I'm in boarding school now—Crescent Hill, you know—the *loveliest* school! But scarlet fever broke out, so school closed two weeks early, and the girl I was going to visit has the fever, so I decided to come right down and spend Christmas with Uncle Lemuel. Won't he be surprised?"

The driver peered out through the soft darkness.

"He will that," he drawled. "Lem ain't so goldarned used to children as some."

The little girl's laugh tinkled gleefully.

"Oh, I'm not a child," she explained. "I guess you didn't see me very well; the station was so dark. Why, I'm thirteen and a half years old, and I've been grown up for a long time. I had to be, you see, to take care of the children. Mother had her hands so full

with the people and the schools and father's meetings and all that. Being a missionary is the most absorbing work there is," she ended impressively.

"Oh, I see," chuckled Mr. Bennett. "Quite an old lady, and a missionary to boot. That's lucky, now. Lem's been lookin' for a housekeeper for quite a spell, they say—ever since the Widder Em left him. A missionary, now, will come in real handy. I'll drive ye right over first, and stop to the office on the way back. Can you see that light down there? That's Lem's kitchen. Want I should come in with ye, sissy?"

The little girl pondered for a minute. "No, I believe not," she answered. "It would make you seem more like Santa Claus, I think, if you just dropped me and rode away."

Mr. Bennett chuckled.

"Mebbe it would, sissy, mebbe it would. I hain't seen Sandy Claus in so long that I've pretty nigh forgot how he does act. Whoa, there, you rein-deers! Hold on while I drop a Christmas passel down through Lem Perkins' chimley. Good-by now, sissy. Good luck to ye. Giddap thar, you rein-deers! Giddap!"

CHAPTER II.

In the kitchen wing of the old-fashioned brown house an old man was just beginning to get supper, a choleric old man, if one could judge by the bushy fierceness of the shaggy eyebrows above the sharp blue eyes, and the aggressive slant of the gray chin whisker. Mr. Lemuel Perkins had come in rather late from a particularly heated meeting of the village debating society, in grocery store assembled, and you will have to admit that it is not a soothing experience for a hungry man to find the kitchen in dire confusion, the fire in the cook stove nothing but a mass of embers, and not a sign of supper in sight unless the attenuated remains of a solitary dinner answer that description.

A fire was blazing in the stove now, however; and, girdled in a blue gingham apron, Mr. Perkins was adding to the general confusion on the kitchen

table by trying to "stir up" something for supper, with the aid of a "ring-streaked and spotted" recipe book.

Intent upon discovering whether a certain eleven was really eleven or only a one and a fly speck, Mr. Perkins totally disregarded the sound of "some one gently tapping, tapping" at his kitchen door, and did not even realize that it had been pushed open till a brisk young voice inquired:

"How do you do! Does my uncle, Mr. Lemuel Perkins, live here?"

"Huh?" demanded Mr. Perkins, whirling about, recipe book in hand, and eying the intruder fiercely.

But fierce looks can find no entrance through a pair of rose-colored spectacles that are radiating sunshine and good will as hard as ever they can.

"Oh, you are Uncle Lemuel!" cried a happy little voice, while its owner rushed headlong across the kitchen with outstretched arms. "I'm so glad to see you." With a gay little spring she planted a kiss on the tip of the bristling chin whisker. "I'm your grandniece, Mary, and I've come to spend Christmas with you for a surprise. Have you had scarlet fever?"

"Huh?" inquired Mr. Perkins again, a trifle less fierce, but much more bewildered.

"Scarlet fever?" shrieked Mary, deciding at once that of course a proper great-uncle would be deaf. "Have—you—had—scarlet fever? I've—been exposed!"

"For the land sakes, little gal, quit your yellin'! I ain't deaf," retorted Mr. Perkins. "Who'd you say you was?"

"Mary, your niece; but I'm not a little girl. I'm thirteen and a half. Mother says I'm a real little woman."

"She does, does she? Waal, we'll see which on us is right about it. Is there one cup of flour in pancakes, or eleven? This blamed receipt book is so messed up I can't tell."

"Oh, are you making pancakes?" returned his guest joyfully. "I'm so glad. I was afraid you'd be through supper, and I'm almost starved. You wouldn't let me make the pancakes, would you, Uncle Lemuel? India's not a very suit-

able place for them, mother says, so we never had them much, but she let me make them once or twice, and I just love to hear them go splash on the griddle, and then bob up like a rubber ball, and then flop them over, all brown and lovely. It's such fun! But probably you love to make them, too. I oughtn't to ask the first night, I suppose."

Uncle Lemuel's visage, being trained to express habitual displeasure, had no difficulty in concealing the feelings of joy that coursed through him at these words. As he himself would have expressed it, he "hated like dumb p'ison to cook a meal of vittles," but it was against Uncle Lemuel's principles to display satisfaction with the happenings of the world about him.

"Well," he responded slowly, "if you're so set on it, I s'pose you might as well. Only don't be wasteful now, and stir up a mess we can't eat."

He handed over the recipe book with a grudging air that would have deceived the very elect.

"I won't," promised his guest happily, whisking off her coat with one hand and her hat with the other, and finally finding a satisfactory place for them on a remote rocking-chair covered with red calico. "What fun, starting in housekeeping with you right away like this! And such a grand fire! Will you set the table, and have you got some real maple sirup? I don't think they have at school, but mother said you and Aunt Nancy got it right from your own trees. Do you keep them in the back yard, and go out and draw some when you want it, as if you were milking a cow?"

She was diving into her russet leather hand bag as she spoke, and presently she pulled out a blue gingham apron with triumphant glee.

"Here's my big kitchen apron. Isn't it the luckiest thing that I brought it in my hand bag? I didn't have a chance to wear it at school, so I left it out of my trunk, and then I ran across it at the last minute, and tuckd it in here. Everything does turn out so grandly! Why, see, our aprons match! How

funny! We're twins, aren't we? Will you button me up in the back, please, and then I'll tie yours again. Yours is slipping off."

In another moment the dazed Mr. Perkins found himself fumbling with the buttons on a small blue gingham back; and then, before he could even think of the first letter of Jack Robinson's name, a capable hand had tightened his own apron strings, and transported by two active little feet was marshaling the various "ingrejunts" that he had already gathered together on the kitchen table.

Muttering something about maple sirup, he retreated to the cellar to collect his wits, though he knew full well that the sirup can, since time immemorial, had occupied the right-hand end of the top "butt'ry" shelf.

By the time he returned, the culinary operations had been transferred to the sink bench, and the kitchen table was laid for two. On the stove a shining griddle was smoking in anticipation, while the little cook was giving a last anxious whip to the batter.

"I couldn't find the napkins, Uncle Lemuel," she called, as the cellarway door opened. "Will you get them out, please, and put the butter and sirup on the table? Oh, I do *pray* these cakes will be good! It's such a responsibility to cook for a grown-up man!"

A silence, heavy with the deepest anxiety, settled almost visibly over the Perkins kitchen from the first slap of the batter upon the smoking griddle, till three cakes had been duly "fopped" by the little cook's careful hand. These, however, presented to view such beautiful, round, creamy countenances, almost obscured by very becoming brown lace veils, that two huge sighs of relief exhaled together; one of which was speedily transformed into a dry little cough, while Uncle Lemuel turned and tiptoed away in search of the tea caddy and the old brown pot.

"As soon as we get six, we can sit down and begin," called Mary excitedly. "The stove's so handy I can cook and eat, too. That's such a nice thing about eating in the kitchen. We could

never do that in India, there were always too many servants around, though mother tried to keep it as much like an American home as she could. That's why she taught me to cook—so we could have American dishes."

"Can you make pie?" queried Uncle Lemuel, through a mouthful so dripping with maple sirup that even his tones seemed sweetened.

"No, I can't," admitted Mary regretfully. "Father didn't think pie was good for us, so mother never tried to manage that."

All traces of sirup departed abruptly from Uncle Lemuel's tones.

"Good for ye?" he growled. "Well, if that ain't just like some folkses impudence! Good for ye? Humph! Mebbe if I hadn't et it three times a day I mightn't have had no more sprawl than to go out to Injy and lay round under a green cotton umbrell' with a black feller fannin' the flies off of me. Why, it's eatin' pie reg'lar that's put the United States ahead of all the other nations of the world! It's the bulwark of the American Constitution, pie is."

Mary gazed at him with wide and interested eyes. Her mental picture of her own overworked father was so many leagues away from the vision under the green cotton umbrella that, far from resenting Uncle Lemuel's thrust, she never even recognized it.

"Do you think maybe that's the matter with our constitutions?" she inquired eagerly. "I had to come over to school because I wasn't well, and father isn't a bit strong, either. Mother thought it was the climate."

Uncle Lem's growl struggled through another mouthful of sirup.

"Climate! Huh! A man that eats strengthenin' food enough can stand up against any climate the Almighty ever made. I've felt sorter pindlin' myself since I hain't had my pie reg'lar, an' the climate of Oatka Center is the same as ever, hain't it?"

Even the intellect of a missionary as old as thirteen and a half is forced to bow before such logic as that.

"Then I must learn how to make pie straight away," announced Mary sol-

emnly. "Could you teach me, Uncle Lemuel?"

Uncle Lemuel shook his head.

"It takes womenfolks to make pies," he admitted grudgingly. "I hain't had a decent pie in the house since the Widder Em left here."

"Did she make good ones?" inquired Mary sympathetically.

Uncle Lemuel was almost torn in twain between his natural tendency toward disparagement and the soothing effects of the innumerable procession of well-browned griddle cakes that had come his way.

"There is folks," he compromised, "that thinks she was a master hand at it. Some say the best in the village. I've et worse myself."

"It's too bad she moved away," sighed Mary; "but I guess we can find somebody else. Mother said the people in Oatka Center were the kindest in the world, and of course they'd do it for you, anyhow."

A touch of a smile twitched at one corner of the old man's mouth.

"Oh, yes," he assented, with grim humor. "Any durned one of 'em would do anythin' under the canopy for me."

"That's because you'd do anything under the canopy for them," agreed the little girl. "Kind people always find other people kind, mother says. I do wish I could do something for you myself, you're such a nice uncle, but I'm getting so sleepy I can't think of a thing. If you're through, we'd better wash the dishes quickly, else I might," she ended, with a sleepy little giggle, "tumble—splash—into the dishpan."

CHAPTER III.

It was still dark when a resounding thump on the door of the "parlor bedroom" wakened the unconscious little missionary, who had plumped into the exact center of its feather bed the night before, and had never stirred since.

"Be ye goin' to sleep all day?" growled a voice outside.

The little brown head bounced out of its pillow like a jack-in-a-box.

"Goodness, no!" answered its owner.

in a startled voice. "I didn't know it was daytime. Why, I meant to help you get breakfast! Is it too late?"

"I s'pose I can wait, if you're set on makin' some more pancakes," responded Uncle Lemuel craftily. "But you'd better flax around pretty spry. I'll get the griddle het up."

The air of that "parlor bedroom" was certainly conducive to spry "flaxing" if you didn't want to congeal in a half-dressed condition, and by the time the griddle was well "het," the new cook appeared on the scene.

"Good morning, Uncle Lemuel!" she cried gayly, whisking across the kitchen and planting a swift little kiss upon that gentleman's amazed countenance before she whirled about and presented her blue gingham back to be buttoned. "You certainly are the nicest man in the world to wait so I could cook, and I have planned a perfectly grand surprise for you, too. We're going to have the jolliest Christmas together that ever was. Is the coffee made yet?"

"Who told you to come here for Christmas?" demanded Mr. Perkins, as he began on his second plate of pancakes.

"Nobody at all," bubbled his guest gleefully. "That's the joke of it. It's a perfect surprise all around. I was going home with Patty Stanwood, you know, because her mother and mine used to be school friends. And then Patty had scarlet fever, and her mother was afraid of me on account of the baby. So then I remembered what fine times mother used to have here when she was a girl, and I knew this would be just the ideal place to spend Christmas. You know, I've never seen a real snowy American Christmas before in my life, and I'm just wild about it. The girls at school call me 'Merry Christmas,' instead of 'Mary Christie,' because I talk so much about it, and I love it for a name! Aren't you just crazy about Christmas, Uncle Lemuel?"

Crazy about Christmas? Yes, indeed, little Merry! Why, it was only the afternoon before, Job Simpkins, of the village "Emporium," would have told you, that "Lem Perkins had bel-

lered and tore around as if the very name of Christmas was a red flannin rag waved in front of a bull."

But when he looked into the shining young eyes before him, even Uncle Lemuel's frenzy couldn't fail to be a trifle abated.

"I hain't much use for it—late years," he answered gruffly. "Folks make such tarnation fools of themselves."

"Oh, you are a Christmas reformer," translated his little guest blithely. "Lots of people are in America, they say. Maybe you are a Spug. Are you a Spug, Uncle Lemuel?"

"No, siree, Republican and Hard-shell Baptist, same as I've always been. The old ways is good enough for me. What's Spug, I'd like to know?"

Mary clapped her hands.

"I'm so glad!" she cried gleefully. "It's a society to make you give useful Christmas presents to people, and I've had useful ones all my life—being a missionary family with five children, of course we had to. But I'd rather join a society to prevent them myself, for I like useless ones lots better. Don't you? I've been hoping awfully that somebody would give me a string of red beads or a set of pink hair ribbons. Oh, I didn't mean that for a hint! Do excuse me, Uncle Lemuel! Of course, I'll like best whatever you choose. How big a turkey do you usually buy?" she ended hastily.

"Don't buy none," grunted Uncle Lemuel, with his nose in his coffee cup.

"Why, of course not! You raise them yourself, don't you? I am a goose," she laughed. "Besides, people always invite you when you live alone. I hope they won't this year. It would be such fun to have a Christmas party of our own, wouldn't it, right here in this kitchen? Who do you want to invite? I must go right out and get acquainted, so I'll have some friends of my own to ask. It's only two weeks off, but you can make a lot of friends in two weeks, can't you, if you go about it the right way? See what friends we've got to be already!"

"The science of self-expression" was quite unknown when Uncle Lemuel



A brisk young voice inquired: "How do you do! Does my uncle, Mr. Lemuel Perkins, live here?"

went to district school, but it would have demanded a full dramatic course adequately to cope with the torrent of varying emotions that was surging through the time-worn channels of his consciousness. Surprise, disgust, amusement, wonder, disapproval, horror, and a wee touch of pleasure tumbled over one another in rapid succession.

And some way the wee touch of pleasure in the child's innocent friendliness and liking soared high enough on top of the flood to soften the hard old mouth for a little and keep back for the nonce the bitter words that would shatter her Christmas air castles to fragments. Nobody had really liked Lemuel Perkins in so many years that he couldn't be blamed for enjoying the

sensation, though he felt as queer as must an ice-bound stream when the first little trickle of water creeps warmly through its breast.

"Want I should help ye with the dishes?" he inquired almost kindly. "I've got to go over to town of an errand after a spell."

"Oh, have you got time? I'm so glad! Do you know, that's the funny thing about dishes? If you do them alone, they are the worst old job that ever was, but when somebody nice wipes for you, they're just fun. Mother says it's that way with most kinds of work. Could you stay long enough to help sort things out a little, too? For a man, of course, you're a very nice housekeeper—you ought to see father!—but with two of us around we may

need a little more room, don't you think so?"

Fortunately there was no one at hand to reveal the fact that, no longer ago than two hours, Mr. Lemuel Perkins had stated firmly to the kitchen stove that "folks that walked in on you unasked and unwanted should at least pay for their vittles by doing all the housework." Kitchen stoves do not taunt you with changing your mind, so Uncle Lemuel was not hampered by the fear that has kept many a better man from improving on himself.

By half past nine the Perkins kitchen shone resplendent in the morning sunshine with a brightness reminiscent of the days when Aunt Nancy had boasted proudly that her kitchen was the pleasantest room in the house.

Uncle Lemuel would really have liked to sit down and enjoy its sunny neatness for a while, but an irresistible impulse had begun tugging at his cowhide boots, and Uncle Lemuel had no choice but to set them at once on the path to the post office. For nine o'clock is "mail time" in Oatka Center, and either totally unsocial or completely bedridden are the menfolks who fail to forgather on a fine winter morning in the ever-exciting pursuit of the letter that never comes.

"I'm goin' over to the office, and to get the meat," he announced, pulling his old cap down over his ears.

"Oh, I hope you'll get me a letter!" cried Mary. "I never feel perfectly at home in a new place till I begin to get mail. Do you know the postmaster, Uncle Lemuel?"

"Know Marthy Ann Watkins?" jeered Uncle Lemuel. "Knowed her since she was knee high to a grasshopper. And, moreover, if there's a man, woman, or child in this township that don't know Marthy Ann, it ain't her fault; you can bet your bottom dollar on that. Keepin' track of folks is her business. Prob'ly knows what we et for breakfast by this time."

Mary's laughter bubbled out merrily. "Goodness me, Uncle Lemuel! Then she knows that I haven't written to mother yet, to tell her where I am. So

I'd better do it right away. Maybe I'll see you over at the post office by and by. Have you any special messages for mother and father, or shall I just send your love?"

Uncle Lemuel was engaged in hauling his old cap still farther over his ears, and apparently he did not hear this amazing question, for he emitted no sounds but another grunt before the door slammed behind him.

"He *is* deaf," decided his little guest innocently; "but I mustn't make him see that I notice it by asking over. Deaf people are so sensitive. Love will do this time, anyway."

CHAPTER IV.

It was nearly ten o'clock when Mary pushed open the door of the post office and stepped in. Not a soul was in sight, so she tiptoed over to the little window framed in boxes.

"Are you Miss Martha Watkins?" she inquired cheerfully.

"Mercy land!" ejaculated a thin lady inside, quitting at one bound her creaky rocking-chair and her enthralling occupation of sorting picture post cards. "Who be you, child, and whose mail do you want?"

"My own, if there is any—Mary Christie's—but I guess there isn't, for I only got here last night. I really came to mail my letter to mother, and get acquainted with you. My uncle said you were the friendliest lady in town, and I'm looking for friends, myself."

"Who's your uncle?" inquired Miss Watkins.

"Mr. Lemuel Perkins, a very old friend of yours. Isn't he nice?"

Miss Marthy overlooked the last question.

"And what did Lem Perkins say about me, did you say?" she demanded.

Mary knitted her brows.

"He said," she repeated slowly, "that you—that you—oh, I know!—that you tried to be friends with everybody in town, and it wasn't your fault if you weren't. And I needed some help right away, so of course I came to you."

Miss Watkins struggled not to look as pleased as she felt.

"Now, who in tunket would uv thought that of Lem Perkins?" she marveled. "Well, he hit the nail on the head anyways. I do love to be friendly with folks, that's certain. What can I do for you, sissy?"

"Can you tell me who's the best pie maker in town, since uncle's housekeeper moved away? It's such a shame she's gone, for I want to learn right off for a surprise for uncle."

"She that was the Widder Em Cottle, do you mean? Mis' Caldwell that is?"

Mary hesitated.

"Uncle said the Widow Em. Is she Mrs. Caldwell, too? He said people thought she was the best pie maker in town. Is that the one?"

Miss Watkins stared.

"Lem Perkins has certainly met a change of heart!" she ejaculated. "What made you think she'd moved away? She lives in that white house just beyond your uncle's. I'll bet he never told you the whole story, did he?"

She leaned forward eagerly.

But Mary was absorbed in her joy over the happy turn of affairs.

"Oh, goody, goody!" she exclaimed gleefully. "Why, I must have misunderstood uncle some way. Isn't that glorious? Now I can run right up there, and maybe she'll teach me before dinner. Oh, thank you so much, Miss Watkins. You are a real friend, just as uncle said. I'm going to come down this afternoon and get your help about Christmas, too. Good-by."

Right outside the door she encountered Mr. Bennett, the bus driver, returning from a leisurely trip to the "ten o'clock."

"Well, if here ain't the lady missionary!" he called cheerfully. "Where ye goin' so fast this fine morning? Huntin' heathen?"

Mary giggled.

"No," she returned merrily. "Going to hunt for a missionary myself—Mrs. Caldwell, that was uncle's housekeeper."

"Jump in, then, and I'll give ye a lift. I have to go right by the door, to carry some feed to Elder Smith's."

"Oh, goody!" cried Mary again, bobbing up on the front seat with one spring. "Another sleigh ride! And now, if uncle's got home, he won't see me go by."

"Has Lem done anythin' to scare ye?" demanded Mr. Bennett, suddenly dropping his joking manner.

"Mercy me, no!" answered Mary gayly. "Some people might be scared of that growly way he has, I suppose; but when you know how awfully nice he really is that only adds to the fun. I'm going now to learn how to make pies for him for a surprise. Isn't it fine she's so handy to our house? She's the best pie maker in town, uncle says."

"You certainly are the beatin'est young one I've seen in a month of Sundays. Beg pardon, ma'am! I mean beatin'est lady missionary, o' course. I seen your uncle, though, over to the blacksmith's shop, so he won't be poppin' out and sp'ilin your surprise. Here we be to the Widder Em's now. I'll step in later to get some of the pies."

"Do," returned Mary cordially. "I'll let you know as soon as I can make some real good ones, and then I'll give you all you can eat. Uncle will love to have you."

"Much obleeged," chuckled Mr. Bennett. "I guess I had better drop in and get acquainted with that uncle of yours, too. He sounds kind of furrin to me."

Just then the side door flew open, and a fresh-looking woman in a red calico dress stepped out.

"Hello, Mr. Bennett," she called. "Got anythin' for me this morning?"

"Why, yes," returned Mr. Bennett jocosely. "A Christmas present of an A-number-one missionary. She's a-visitin' her uncle, Mr. Lemuel Perkins; and now she's got him converted she's run over to neighbor with you for a spell. She'll cure you of any heathen idees you've got, Em, quicker'n scat."

Mary turned to shake her finger at

Mr. Bennett, and then ran down the path.

"Isn't he funny?" she laughed merrily. "Anybody'd think Uncle Lemuel was a heathen instead of the nicest uncle that ever was, wouldn't they? But you know better. You've lived at his house. That's why I came over. He says that he hasn't had a decent piece of pie since you left. I guess you spoiled other people's pies for him, for he says you are the very best pie maker in town. So I came over to see if you wouldn't teach me how. He's been such a dear to me since I came that I do want to pay it back somehow—only, of course, you never can exactly."

Surprise and pleasure struggled in Mrs. Caldwell's countenance, as she led the way into her immaculate kitchen.

"Why, I didn't know 't Lem relished my pies so well," she said deprecatingly. "I don't lay out to be no great of a cook. Why, yes, of course I'll teach you. 'Tain't no knack."

"Oh, thank you!" cried her little guest, bounding out of the rocking-chair in which she had just seated herself. "Could you do it to-day, do you think? Uncle says he's been 'real pindling' since you left, and he thinks it's on account of the pies."

"You don't say!" ejaculated her hostess. "Lem must 'a' been feelin' sorry for some of the things he said. I'm afeared there ain't time to teach ye much afore noon, but I've got some fresh-baked pies handy. I'll give ye one to take home with ye for dinner. You can come back this afternoon and learn how yourself."

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" explained Mary. "You see, I really ought to do my Christmas shopping this afternoon. My family live so far away that they won't get their presents now till awfully late, but I couldn't before on account of the sickness at school. Where's the best store in the village?"

"There ain't but two," laughed Mrs. Caldwell, "and I guess it's which and t'other between 'em. They've both got in a pretty good stock this year. You'd better go to Job Simpson's, I guess. Lem does his tradin' there now."

"Mother sent me five dollars," announced her guest proudly. "I think, with all of that to spend, I'd better divide it between the two. Don't you think it would be fairer? It might hurt the other man's feelings if I didn't buy anything of him, and mother says you mustn't ever hurt people's feelings if you can help it. What do you think Uncle Lemuel would like best? It's hard to choose for a man—even father. What did you usually give him when you lived there?"

When a man grudgingly pays you only two dollars and a half a week for doing all of his housework, and making the kitchen garden besides, it is not very surprising that your Christmas presents to him have been few and far between, but under the glance of the shining eyes before her, the late "Widder Em" suddenly hesitated to explain that fact.

"Why, I dunno," she stammered. "I—I—why don't you give him a coffee cup? I'll show you one I got for the deacon. It says 'Merry Christmas' on it in red."

"Oh, oh!" cried the other Merry Christmas, gazing in an ecstasy of admiration. "It'll be just the thing for me to give uncle, won't it? If it only said 'From,' now! Oh, I didn't tell you about my name, did I? Well, I must."

And forthwith, away she pranced on her holly-wreathed hobby, till the woman, too, harked back in fancy to the days when "Christmas" was a name of magic, and launched forth into eager reminiscences of her childhood revels, while her visitor listened, entranced.

All at once she tore her gaze from the shining eyes before her.

"Mercy me, child!" she cried suddenly. "And here I was goin' to have veal potpie for dinner, and the deacon'll be as mad as a hatter if his vittles ain't ready on the stroke!" She stopped and kissed the glowing face. "Couldn't you stay, little Merry Christmas?" she asked softly.

"I wish I could!" cried Mary. "I'd love to! But you see I'm housekeeping for uncle, so I want to go right away."

He'd be so disappointed if I wasn't there. I'll come some time with him, pretty soon."

"'Peace on earth, good will to men,'" quoted Mrs. Caldwell softly. "Then good-by, little Christmas girl. Here's another pie for you, dearie—mince. Lem was always partial to mince."

"Oh, thank you *so* much!" cried Mary in delight. "Uncle will be awfully pleased. He certainly has the nicest friends in the world. Good-by, you dear Mrs. Caldwell. I must run and get things started."

It was quarter to twelve when Uncle Lemuel stamped up the snowy path to the kitchen door and flung it open. On the stove a steaming kettle was bubbling merrily. On the table "covers were laid," as the society column has it, for two. Certainly a pleasant sight for a hungry man who had been cooking his own dinners and setting his own table—if setting it could be called—for two dreary years. But, strangely enough, Uncle Lemuel's gaze turned unsatisfied from the attractive table, and even rested coldly upon the bubbling pot.

"What's become of that gal?" he growled to himself, dexterously kicking the door shut behind him.

A little blue gingham catapult dashed out from the departing shelter, and flung herself at his back, while two little hands made futile attempts to reach far enough to cover his eyes.

"Here I am!" cried a gay voice behind him. "Merry Christmas! Are you Mr. Santa Claus? I hope you've got some meat in your pack for me. I'm nearly starved, honest! I've got the potatoes and turnips on, the way you told me. Do you hear them? Oh, it's sausage! Goody! I love sausage! And what do you think? I've got the nicest surprise for you, too. You'd better cook the sausage, though, for I can't do it very well. And I will make the tea."

Uncle Lem grunted almost as gruffly as ever in response, but, between you and me, that was just because he was trying so hard not to reveal the little thrills of pleasure that were warming

the cockles of his hard old heart. And the best joke of all was that he never guessed that the softened glance of his sharp blue eyes and the gentler lines around his grim old mouth were betraying him as fast as ever they could.

Mary bobbed hither and yon, trying the potatoes and relieving them of their brown jackets, preparing the turnips under directions, and making the tea in a most housewifely manner. Finally, she settled down into her place at the head of the table with a sigh of absolute content.

"How do you take your tea, Mr. Perkins?" she inquired in the most elegant of society tones; then, suddenly resuming her own: "You don't know what fun it is, Uncle Lemuel," she cried, "to be the real lady of the house, and ask about the ter, and say, 'Let me help you to a little more sauce,' or, 'Which kind of pie will you have, mince or apple?' Goodness, I almost gave it away then! And oh, uncle, I can't keep my surprise a minute longer—honest I can't!"

She sprang up from the table and into the pantry, whence she emerged immediately with a beaming face and a pie balanced upon either hand.

"Which will you have, Mr. Perkins, apple or mince?" she inquired gleefully, bobbing a little curtsy to the imminent peril of the pies. "Your constitution won't have to feel 'pindling' any longer, for here are two fine, large ones—enough to last several meals, I guess. Mrs. Caldwell sent them to you, with her compliments. She said you liked mince particularly, but I like apple just as well, so we can play Jack Spratt and his wife. People in Oatka Center are just *lovely*, aren't they? It's because I'm your niece, of course, so far, but I hope by and by they'll like me for my own sake."

As "she that was the Widder Em" and Mr. Perkins had not spoken to each other since they had parted with mutual recriminations two years before, it is not to be wondered at that that gentleman laid down his knife and fork, and stared in open bewilderment.

"Em Cottle sent them pies to me?"



In another moment the dazed Mr. Perkins found himself fumbling with the buttons on a small blue gingham back.

he demanded. "To me? How in thunder did she happen to do that?"

"Why, because she liked you, of course," explained Mary simply. "That's why everybody gives each other things. That's what Christmas is for especially, mother says—to give you a good chance to show other people that you love them—just the way God showed us when He gave us the little Baby Jesus."

And once again something—was it the dear gift that she had mentioned?—kept back the sharp words that were hovering upon the old man's lips.

CHAPTER V.

In Uncle Lemuel's able dissertation upon the virtues of pie, that bulwark of the American Constitution, he neglected to mention one of its most

remarkable features—namely, its effect upon the flow of the milk of human kindness. Nothing else certainly could explain the fact that when the dishes were finished the next morning he stamped down the cellar stairs and returned presently with a basket of juicy winter pears, which he plumped down upon the kitchen table.

In a voice that was "growlier" than ever, he said:

"If you're goin' over to the Widder Em's any time again, you might as well carry this mess of pears along. Old man Caldwell never did have gumption enough to raise winter pears, and Em was always partial to 'em. You musn't never let yourself be beholden to folks."

Mary clapped her hands.

"How lovely to have a whole cellar full of things to give away! It must make you feel like Santa Claus, and I'm the Merry Christmas that goes with them. And, oh, won't Mrs. Caldwell be pleased!"

But pleasure was far from Mrs. Caldwell's predominating emotion when Merry Christmas presented the basket some fifteen minutes later, with the polite addition that it was "with Uncle Lem's love and thanks."

"For the land sakes alive!" ejaculated the one-time Widow Em, almost letting the gift fall in her amazement. "Is Lem Perkins experiencin' religion in his old age?"

Mary looked a little puzzled by the irrelevance of the question.

"Why, yes, I guess so," she answered happily. "Mother says really good people experience it all their lives. And we're experiencing Christmas, too. Isn't it the best fun? We've begun a list of our Christmas presents, and I put down your pies at the head—apple for me and mince for Uncle Lem. Is it quite convenient for you to teach me this morning?"

"Yes, indeed, sissy; yes, indeed," returned Mrs. Caldwell, recovering herself. "I've got the dishes of fillin' all ready, and we can begin right away. There ain't no knack to it but the know how. Don't you know folks always say 'easy as pie'?"

"Why, so they do!" agreed Mary joyfully. "But I thought that meant easy as eating pie. I never knew how easy that was till yesterday. You see, father didn't think they were good for us—and I suppose Indian ones wouldn't have been," she added loyally. "But you ought to have seen Uncle Lem and me yesterday! The pies were so good that we just ate and ate, apple and mince turn about, till we had all we could do to save enough for breakfast. And I do feel perfectly fine this morning—and so does uncle. I guess our constitutions needed it. Could I learn to make three this morning—one for each meal?"

Under Mrs. Caldwell's capable direction, the lesson progressed finely, and in due time three fragrant pies and a turnover were cooling upon the kitchen sink bench—pies that for brown flakiness of crust and general comeliness of aspect would not have disgraced the champion of the county fair herself.

"They look lovely, don't they?" inquired their creator anxiously. "But, oh, I can hardly wait till dinner time to see how they taste! Oh, Mrs. Caldwell, how shall I ever bear it if they aren't really good and Uncle Lemuel is disappointed?"

"There, there, now, don't you fret!" soothed kindly Mrs. Caldwell. "Lem don't always say things out same as some do, but I'll bet a cooky he'll think them pies is as good as any he ever et in his life."

"Oh, I do *pray* that they'll be good!" ejaculated the little cook fervently. "It's such a responsibility cooking for men, isn't it? But I like it," she added naively, "even though I'm scared. Can't I *possibly* tell about them before dinner time?"

Mrs. Caldwell considered.

"Well, yes," she admitted. "If you want to do some extra Christmassin' this mornin', I can think up a job for ye. The schoolmarm, Miss Porter, boarded with me last winter, and she was real partial to a hot turnover for her mornin' recess. If you want to give her yourn, the schoolhouse is only a piece up the road, and if you run tight

as you can lick it, I guess you can get there before the bell rings. I'll just tie my cloud over your head, so you can run faster."

Ten minutes later a breathless little figure, in a red "cloud," dashed up to the door of the old stone schoolhouse, just as the joyous pandemonium of recess broke out. Knocking seemed quite a superfluous refinement in the midst of all that babel, so she lifted the great latch, and then was nearly capsized by a flying wedge of small boys who came hurtling out to the accompaniment of a long-pent-up explosion of war whoops. The point of the wedge stopped and surveyed the reeling, small figure with the natural defiance of the guilty party.

"What d'you git in my way for?" he demanded gruffly.

To his surprise his victim merely giggled.

"Did you think I was a turnover, too?" she inquired. "Because I'm not. This is it, and it's been turned once already. Where's the teacher?"

"Goin' to tell on us?" inquired another boy sulkily.

Mary stared.

"Tell what?" she inquired. "Twasn't your fault. I got in the way. I hope you didn't smash the turnover, though," she added anxiously. "I'm carrying it to the teacher. No, it's all right, thank goodness! Doesn't it look fine?" she inquired, pulling the covering quite away from her prize.

The little boys crowded closer.

"And *smell!*" cried the first one admiringly. "Where'd you get it?"

"I made it myself," returned Mary, with pardonable pride.

"Did you, honest?" he queried, with the natural admiration of the normal male for a good cook. "Say, fellers, let's play school. I'll be teacher."

Mary laughed appreciatively, and then her face sobered. Nobody with a sisterly heart in her bosom could have looked unmoved upon those appealing eyes, alight with the eternal hunger of boyhood—and Mary was sister to four little Christies at home.

"If I possibly can—and these are

good—I'll bring you a whole pie tomorrow," she promised rashly. "Now I must hurry up to the real teacher, honest."

Miss Porter had just finished opening the windows, and was walking briskly back and forth across the end of the room when Mary approached.

"Good morning," she said, in a politely puzzled voice. "Are you a new scholar? Did you want to see me?"

"I wish I *could* come to school," returned Mary promptly, "but I'm just Merry Christmas here on a visit, so I can't. But I've got a present for you. It's a turnover. I made it, but Mrs. Caldwell sent it. Will you eat it right now, please, and tell me how it tastes? I'm worried to death."

"Thank you so much," cried Miss Porter, laughing. "We'll eat it together, then. I'm sure it's delicious, but that's the best way to prove it to you. And there's Nora O'Neil. I don't think she brought any lunch, so we'll give her some. And then if we all agree that it's good, it must be fine, mustn't it?"

In two minutes they were all munching happily together on the flaky triangle, which Miss Porter and Nora O'Neil praised till the blushing cook felt that they appreciated her masterpiece at almost its true value.

By this time other little girls, nibbling at their own pies and cakes and doughnuts, had begun crowding shyly around to stare at the newcomer.

"These are my little girls," announced Miss Porter affectionately, nodding to a few of the more timid ones to come closer. "And who do you suppose this is who's come to see us to-day? Merry Christmas! What do you think of that? She was visiting dear Mrs. Caldwell up the road, so she lived up to her name and brought me a nice hot turnover for lunch."

The little girls stared.

"Merry Christmas?" they whispered to one another. "Do you s'pose? Is she—*real?*"

Mary's sharp ears caught the whispers.

"My true-for-a-fact name is Mary Christie," she explained merrily, "but

they call me Merry Christmas at school because I'm so crazy about snow, and Christmas trees, and Santa Claus, and everything. Aren't you?"

Several little girls nodded eagerly, then a sudden gloom seemed to settle down upon them.

"Might be," hazarded one.

"Why, what's the matter?" inquired Mary, with quick sympathy.

The plague of dumbness lifted all at once.

"We was going to have a tree," began one.

"And a party," interrupted another.

"On Christmas Eve."

"Here to the schoolhouse."

"And give presents."

"And pop corn, and candy, and everything."

"It was all planned out, and the trustees had almost promised."

They took the sentences out of one another's mouths.

"And old Grouchy Gruff heard of it."

Miss Porter's gentle correction passed unheeded.

"Old Grouchy Gruff heard of it, and said he paid most taxes, and he wouldn't let 'em."

"Said 'twas a waste of fire and lights."

"Mean old thing!"

"And my father said he'd give the wood."

"And mine the oil."

"And then he wouldn't let 'em use the schoolhouse."

"'Cause he hates Christmas!"

"I hate *him*!"

"Mean old thing!"

"Children, children!" chided Miss Porter. "You mustn't talk that way. I'll have to ring the bell. We're late already. Won't you stay and visit us a little while, Merry Christmas?"

But Merry Christmas shook her head.

"I can't just now," she answered gravely. "Maybe I will this afternoon. Good-by!"

The little boys stared in amazement at the quiet little figure that slipped past them with only a perfunctory response to their friendly grins.

"What'd teacher do to ye?" demanded Jimmy Harrison, the one-time front of the flying wedge. "Shall I plug her in the eye with a spitball for ye? I can do it," he added darkly.

Merry Christmas came to herself.

"Oh, no, don't! She's awfully nice," she whispered anxiously. "It's something else—about Christmas," she added. "The teacher didn't do it."

For poor Merry Christmas was struggling with a paralyzing glimpse of human perfidy, and her rose-colored spectacles were searching in vain for a sunny spot to relieve the awful gloom. Could Christian America shelter such an ogre—a man who hated Christmas so that he was going to prevent a party and a tree—and—pop corn—and presents—on Christmas Eve itself? And did that man live in Oatka Center—the very warmest corner in the heart of that same Christian America? It was so incredible that the rose-colored spectacles began to see a ray of hope in that very fact.

"Why, he'd be worse than a heathen!" she murmured. "And of course there aren't any heathen in America, where everybody knows about Christ and His birthday. There's some mistake, that's all; and I'll get uncle to fix it right."

CHAPTER VI.

It was over two years now since the Widow Em Cottle had left Lemuel Perkins' house in a rage at some last straw of household tyranny, and then had widened the breach to a chasm by marrying his hereditary enemy and neighbor, Deacon Caldwell. In all that time the chasm had never been bridged by one friendly word, and never, both had declared, would they utter a syllable to each other, if it were to save their lives.

Fortunately, human beings are rarely as bad or as foolish as their own rash vows; and when Mrs. Emma Caldwell stepped out of the Emporium that morning and ran into Lem Perkins, unmistakably headed for home and dinner, she recognized a "leadin' plain as the nose on her face," as she after-

ward explained to the deacon. And Mrs. Caldwell was far too good a woman to disobey a "leading."

"Mornin', Lem," she began boldly, casting the usual polite fly upon the conversational waters. "Much obliged for the pears. They was as tasty as yours always is."

Mr. Perkins nodded.

"The little gal wanted I should send 'em," he explained gruffly. "She's a great hand for neighborin', sissy is."

The bull having turned his forehead in her direction, Mrs. Caldwell promptly seized him by the horns.

"It's her I want to talk about," she announced. "She's a takin' young one as I've seen in a month o' Sundays, but blind as a bat—or an angel," she added softly. "Land only knows how she's managed it, but she's took all sorts of a shine to her 'dear Uncle Lemuel,' as she calls you—thinks you're the salt of the earth—and good—and kind. Law me, Lem, if you could hear her talk, you'd go home and look in the glass, and say: 'Mercy me, who be I, anyways?'"

"Waal," grunted "dear Uncle Lemuel," turning aside to hide the pleased smile that would twitch at the corners of his mouth in spite of his strenuous efforts. "What's to hender, Mis' Caldwell? Blood is thicker'n water—ain't it?"

"Yourn hain't," retorted Mrs. Caldwell promptly. "It's hern that's got to provide all the thickenin' for two. And as to what's to hender, you are, most likely. I'm worried to death this minute over how soon that little gal's heart is a-goin' to be stove to flinders, a-findin' out how fur you be from an angel dropped. She's been up there to my house this mornin' slavin' away over the cook stove a-makin' pies for a surprise for you, and a-fetchin' of 'em home so careful! Land, I just had to laugh to see her a-carryin' 'em home one to a time—three trips she made of it—usin' both hands, and a-tiptoein' along as if she was Undertaker Pearse a-startin' for a funeral. And now I s'pose she's waitin' there, all nerved up to see how you'll relish 'em—not knowin' that you're just about as likely to

say a word o' praise as a rhinoceros in a circus. But if you don't, it'll break her little heart; that's all I've got to say."

"Humph!" grunted Uncle Lemuel. "Well, so that's all you got to say, Neighbor Caldwell, I'm willin'."

"No, 'tain't," retorted Mrs. Caldwell hotly. "'Tain't by a long shot! Another thing that blessed child's all worked up about is that Christmas business over to school. I sent her over on an errand to the teacher this mornin', and they got to talkin' over there about how you set down on their Christmas doin's in the trustee meetin'. They didn't use your name—called you some kind of nickname or other, the young ones did—and she never dreamed who 'twas, but come back all keyed up and plannin' to git her Uncle Lem to go to the other old what's-his-name and fix things up. And how she's ever goin' to stand it when she finds that that dear Uncle Lem of hers is the old curmudgeon they was talkin' about, I dunno. It's a sin and a shame, Lem Perkins, how that child's cottoned to you—that's what I call it!"

She stopped suddenly with a gulp, and wiped away a tear with the corner of her white apron as she turned away.

Uncle Lem stepped after her.

"Em Cottle," he said abruptly, "you're a truthful woman, as fur as I know—and I've known ye quite a spell. Do you reely b'lieve that young one is so—so—that is—" He paused and cleared his throat. "Does she lot on me as much as she makes out, or is she jest—doin' it—to git my money, mebbe?"

A blaze of anger dried the tears in Em Cottle's eyes.

"Well," she remarked scathingly, "blindness runs in your family, sure enough—only with some it's for bad and with some it's for good—that's all! There ain't no use wastin' no more time on you; that's sure as preachin'."

With a capable hitch of her green plaid shawl, she turned her plump shoulders full upon him, and started briskly up the road.

Uncle Lemuel glanced furtively about him. The village square was empty;

not even Marthy Ann Watkins' eye was visible at the post-office window.

"Em! Oh, Em!" he called loudly, and then, as the brisk figure in front seemed to hesitate for a moment, he scuttled after it.

"Don't be in such a brash, Em," he gasped, as he caught up with her. "We hain't had a dish o' talk in so long that I guess we can afford to spend a minute or so a-doin' it. You didn't jest ketch my meanin' then, Em. I didn't reely think that sissy, there, had plans herself, but I didn't know but mebbe Ellen——"

"If Ellen Rumball had had her eye on your old money bags, she wouldn't 'a' broke with you to go off to Injy with that missionary feller, would she?"

Uncle Lem glowered with the remembrance of past injuries.

"Ellen Rumball pretended to like me, too," he muttered; "and then she deserted me in my old age for that good-for-nothin' missionary chap."

"Pretended?" exploded Mrs. Em; "pretended? If 'tain't real likin' that would make a woman swaller down all the things you said, and the way you acted, and bring up her young ones to think you was the finest uncle goin'. well, then it's real grace; that's all I've got to say! And here I be, a-quarrelin' with you the same as ever, and I'd made up my mind butter shouldn't melt in my mouth."

But Uncle Lemuel was absorbed in



R. Emmet Owen

"Oh, goody!" she cried. "I was so afraid you'd be late, and I didn't want you to miss anything."

struggling against the softening of his grim old face.

"Ellen *has* fetched sissy up fair to middlin' well," he admitted. "She's kind of smart for her years—handy round the house, I mean, ain't she, Em? And folksy—it does beat all! They couldn't nobody around town talk of nothin' this mornin' but 'my little gal,' as they called her. She started out yestiddy arternoon to do her Christmas tradin', and she must 'a' got acquainted with everybody in sight. She promised Marthy Watkins some post cards from Injy. And then the minister comes along, and she got him so interested he asked me if I'd let her speak about mis-

sions to the Children's Band. And Nate Waters—you know I hain't been in Waters' store for a matter of a year or so, since he sold me that busted plow—but out come Mis' Waters this morning, to see if I'd mind her savin' sissy a little red chain she had there. Sissy took to it uncommon, but she didn't have money enough to get it, she'd bought so much truck for other folks, and Mis' Waters wanted to give it to her for Christmas."

"Well, I hope to the land you let her!" cried Mrs. Caldwell. "She was goin' to spend a whole fifty cents a-buyin' you a handsome china cup, Lem, good enough for a president. And though Nate may be tricky sometimes, Mis' Waters is a real nice woman."

Uncle Lem coughed.

"Well, here 'tis, Em," he replied at last, producing a little packet from his overcoat pocket. "But I guess me and my folks don't have to be beholden to the Waterses yet for our fixin's. You know little Loviny was very partial to red, too," he added, after a moment.

They had now reached the Perkins gate, but Mrs. Caldwell suddenly turned and laid a detaining hand on his arm.

"Why, that's who 'tis!" she exclaimed softly. "I've been a-wonderin' and a-wonderin' who that child reminded me of. She don't take after Ellen Rumball exactly, nor yet Christie, as I remember him, but she's got the very same disposition as your little Loviny had, laughin' all day like a brook, and yet as serious and interested as an old woman about things she took a notion to, and the most lovin' little heart that ever was. I was in the Sixth Reader when she began her A B C's, but she got to be friends with the whole school afore the first week was out—and I guess there wa'n't a dry eye to the Center when we heard tell about the runaway. 'Of such is the kingdom of heaven'—that was the text to her funeral, wa'n't it? And I guess 'tis, too, fast enough. And 'twould come a heap sooner on earth, I'm thinkin', if there was more like her—wouldn't it? Well, give my love to sissy," she added

quickly, with kindly tact, "and tell her I'll look for her again in the morning."

But the old man did not heed her. Across the gulf of over forty years he was looking once more at a gay little figure in red merino, that danced before him, while his little daughter's voice cried happily:

"Father, father, come kiss Loviny in her Kissmas-colored d'ess!"

CHAPTER VII.

Uncle Lemuel laid down his knife and fork with a sigh of repletion, and turned toward his little housekeeper.

"Well, sissy," he remarked, softening his growl to a point that he considered positively effeminate, "that ham and eggs was pretty good for fillers, but I wouldn't mind a little somethin' in the line of trimmin's, myself. I s'pose the Widder Em hain't sent in no more pies?"

Mary met this triumph of diplomacy with a masterpiece in kind.

"Oh, Uncle Lemuel," she answered, struggling to hold in leash a half dozen riotous dimples that were determined to pop out, "oh, Uncle Lemuel, it was doughnuts she sent in this time. Won't they do?"

And then she sat with bated breath for fear he should say that they would.

But Uncle Lemuel did not fail her.

"Well, I s'pose I can eat doughnuts," he growled more naturally; "but what I should reely relish is a good piece of pie."

At these welcome words, Mary fairly ran into the pantry and out again.

"Would you really, Uncle Lemuel?" she cried, in a state of tense excitement. "Well, here it is! Somebody else brought them in this time. Apple!" Back once more from the pantry. "Mince!" Another trip. "And blueberry!" she ended triumphantly. "Which one shall I cut?"

Uncle Lemuel surveyed the sumptuous array before him.

"Well," he finally decided, "the blueberry might soak the crust. I dunno but we'd better begin on that. Who'd you say fetched 'em?"

"Oh, a friend of yours," answered Mary hastily. "She wanted you to guess after you tasted them. Here's a nice big piece. I do hope it's good!"

She handed him a generous piece; and then, unmindful of the luscious blue juice oozing temptingly upon her own plate, she sat and watched his every mouthful with an eager anxiety that would have been transparent to a babe in arms.

"Oh, Uncle Lemuel!" she cried, after the lapse of an eternity at least five minutes long. "Oh, why don't you say something? Don't you *like* it?"

"Why don't you eat your own?" retorted Uncle Lemuel. "I'm just tryin' to figger out whose bakin' this is. It's kind of new to me, I guess."

"Isn't it good?" cried Mary breathlessly.

"Uh-humph!" responded Mr. Perkins slowly, struggling to twist his tongue to the unaccustomed language of compliment.

Suddenly a queer little sound across the table made him look up, and, to his amazement, he saw that the usually shining brown eyes were dimmed with tears.

"It'll break her little heart," Mrs. Caldwell's voice seemed to whisper, and with one mighty effort Uncle Lemuel threw discretion to the winds.

"It's better than the Widder Em's," he stated rashly. "And I swan I didn't believe there was a woman in town that could beat her on makin' pies."

Pretty good for a man who hadn't turned a compliment in Heaven knows how many years? But Heaven knows, too, how miraculously fast these hard old hearts will soften sometimes under the warming sunshine of childish love and trust.

"Oh, uncle, do you mean it?" cried a choked little voice, and, with one bound, Mary had flown around the table and flung her arms about his neck. "Oh, Uncle Lemuel," she sobbed happily, "I couldn't ever have borne it if you hadn't liked it, for I made it myself! You'd never believe it, would you? But you can ask Mrs. Caldwell. She showed me how."

"You don't say," responded Uncle Lemuel, patting her awkwardly on the arm. "Was that what you had your head in the oven for when I came in? I thought 'twas them little wind bags you give me."

Mary giggled happily.

"The popovers, you mean? Yes, it was. I always have to sit right down on the floor and watch when I make them, else I don't get them out the right minute. I had meant those for a surprise, too, but you got here so soon you surprised me, instead."

"Well, you run around now, sissy, and cut me another good piece of pie. None of your samples, now," he added, with something that was almost a chuckle. "And you might take a bite or two yourself, now you know it's safe. There won't be no extry charge."

It was a veritable incarnation of Merry Christmas who ran to obey these commands.

"You don't know what a weight that is off my mind!" she sighed blissfully, settling down at last to "bulwark" her own constitution. "They tasted good to me, and to the teacher, and to Nora O'Neil, but of course you were the one that really counted. But, oh, Uncle Lemuel, that reminds me! Do you know who it is that they call 'old Grouchy Gruff'?"

"Huh?" demanded Mr. Perkins, with a growl that would have answered the question to any ears less unsuspecting than those of his little niece.

"Old Grouchy Gruff?" inquired Mary, raising her voice. "Mrs. Caldwell said she couldn't tell me. Do you know him?"

Uncle Lemuel shook his head.

"Don't you, either?" Mary leaned forward confidentially. "Well, Uncle Lemuel, there is somebody around here that they call that. It seems unbelievable, but there's a man in town so horrid that he has stopped the Christmas Eve party at the schoolhouse. The biggest taxpayer, they said he was, Uncle Lemuel. Who would that be?"

But Uncle Lemuel was deeply absorbed in blueberry pie and showed no

interest in the identity of old Grouchy Gruff.

"Do you know," continued Mary thoughtfully, "I almost believe there's some mistake about it somewhere. It doesn't seem possible that there would be anybody who'd stop the children from being happy on the night when the dear little Baby Jesus was born in the manger, and the angels sang: 'Peace on earth, good will to men.' Oh, I just love that part, don't you? The shepherds, and the soft, dark-blue night, and then the lovely star and the angels singing." She paused, and a reverent look softened the brown eyes that shone themselves like two little Christmas stars. "Oh, uncle, it's so beautiful that it makes little thrills go all over me, and I want to cry and I want to laugh. Mother used to read it to us every Christmas Eve, and then we used to sing, 'When shepherds watched their flocks by night.' Oh, I wish they would sing that at the Christmas party!"

"Thought there wa'n't goin' to be none," growled Mr. Perkins.

Mary smiled cheerfully.

"Oh, I think there will be," she answered confidently. "Mother says things always turn out right when you pray about them, and of course I have; and, besides, it's really His own birthday party, and it must be right for us to celebrate that."

"Was you asked to the party?" inquired Uncle Lemuel.

"Of course I'm not asked yet, because there isn't any; but if we can only get that party for them somehow, they'd invite us both, I'm sure. Oh, wouldn't that be fun! Oh, uncle, we've just got to! First, you ask everybody all around who old Grouchy Gruff is, and then, when you find out, we'll go and talk to him and explain. Oh, I'm sure he'd take it back if you explained things to him. Why, *anybody* would be nice about a thing like that if he only understood."

Uncle Lemuel coughed uneasily.

"Mebbe he has his reasons, sissy," he began; "mebbe he has his reasons. They was talkin' it over to the Emporium the other day, and 'tain't the party

part nor the Christmas part that folks objects to so much. It's the schoolhouse. 'Tain't right to the deestrick to tear the schoolhouse to flinders for a thing like that. Why, they'd have to haul up the desks off'n the floor, and rack the benches all to pieces, like as not, and move the teacher's desk and all. They couldn't have a party with the floor all cluttered up with desks and such."

Mary pondered.

"And it would be bad for the desks and seats to move them?"

"Tear 'em to flinders," stated Uncle Lemuel uncompromisingly, following up his advantage. "And, besides, they wanted to make candy and pop corn, and a schoolroom is no place for that. They need a kitchen stove."

Mary was still pondering, but her eyes were suddenly brighter.

"Besides," added Uncle Lemuel, delighted that his eloquence was proving even more effective here than it had in that memorable session at the Emporium, "the schoolhouse don't light up very first class, nor heat neither—for a winter night. We don't want the young ones a-ketchin' their deaths," he finished, with an effective, but unexpected, burst of altruism.

Mary clapped her hands.

"Oh, I knew you and I could fix it all right!" she cried gleefully. "Yes, sir; we can have it right here in this kitchen. I'd rather have it than the other party we planned. And that old Grouchy ogre man won't have a thing to say. Mrs. Caldwell said you couldn't do anything about it, but I knew better. And, oh, Uncle Lemuel, this will be just too lovely for words! We'll put the tree in that corner, and they can make their candy and pop corn on the stove, and still have plenty of room to play games. I knew what you meant the very minute you said kitchen stove, and I do think you are the nicest, dearest, preciousesest uncle that ever walked, so I do!" She ran around the table again to bestow an ecstatic hug upon the speechless Mr. Perkins. "And everybody else thinks so, too, for I asked

them yesterday, and not a person disagreed.

"This kitchen is just like a talent, isn't it, Uncle Lem? I guess you must be the man that had ten of them; you have so many ways to make people happy. I have only one so far—a loving heart; and everybody has that, of course; but mother says if I keep hard at work with that, I'll get others to use in time. When do you suppose afternoon recess is, uncle?"

"Huh?" inquired Mr. Perkins, in a voice that betrayed his condition of utter daze.

"Afternoon recess?" repeated Mary, more loudly. "I just can't wait to go over and tell those poor children that it's all right. They'll be so happy. Oh, uncle, you dear, dear thing! Don't you want to go, too?"

"I've got to go over to Meadsbury this afternoon," explained Uncle Lemuel hastily. "Thought you might like to go for the ride. There's room enough in the cutter. You get ready, while I tackle up. We can leave the dishes."

"Oh, goody! My fourth sleigh ride! I'll just slip on my hat and coat, and run ahead. You can stop at the schoolhouse for me. Do you know, Uncle Lemuel, I don't want to find out who old Grouchy Gruff is, after all? So don't ask, will you? I want to love everybody in Oatka Center, and I know I never could a man like that."

Up till that moment, Uncle Lemuel had really meant in the back of his mind to "put a stop to sissy's foolishness" as soon as he could get his breath, but right then and there a most remarkable thing happened. A poor, starved, rickety old organ down under his left ribs, which he had almost forgotten he owned, and would have been ashamed to mention, anyway, suddenly spoke up in the most surprising manner.

"You've starved and choked and neglected me for these many years, Lemuel Perkins," it said, "and tried your best sometimes to kill me off entirely; but the tonic of that little girl's love, with the tender memories that it wakens in me, has called me back again to life and strength. You may explain

in any way you like to those old loafers at the Emporium, you may growl all you choose to old Topsy out in the barn, but you may *not* disappoint that little heart that believes in you and loves you, in spite of yourself, nor choke up that little fountain of innocent affection that is filling my very cockles full of youth and love."

And Uncle Lemuel proved that he was a wise man, after all, by pulling his old cap down low over his ears, and stamping without a word out to the barn to "tackle up."

Half an hour later he stopped old Topsy in front of the stone schoolhouse, to pick up a small and excited "brown package with a red label," that certainly said "Merry Christmas" as far as you could see it.

"Oh, Uncle Lemuel," cried the package, bobbing to his side as if it were full of springs, "why didn't you come a little sooner? Oh, I wish you had been here! I whispered about it to Miss Porter, and she stopped the classes and let me tell them all myself what you said about the schoolhouse, and that you invited them to come to your house for the Christmas party. At first they thought my uncle was Deacon Caldwell, wasn't that funny? But when they heard that it was you, they all just clapped and clapped. They like you awfully, don't they, you dear, dear Uncle Lem? And then they gave three cheers for Merry Christmas—that's me; and then three more for you. Oh, I wish you could have heard them say: 'What's the matter with Mr. Perkins? He's all right!' I was so proud, I almost cried when I heard them. Uncle Lemuel, this is going to be the very happiest Christmas that ever was, isn't it?"

CHAPTER VIII.

The village of Oatka Center had no sooner swallowed the amazing fact that Lemuel Perkins was going to give the school children a Christmas party in his own house, than its bump of credulity was again strained almost to the bursting point by the information that Mrs. Em Caldwell was helping actively about



the preparation, and that Mr. Lemuel Perkins himself had been seen bringing several parcels from "Nate Waterses store," and even talking amicably with Elder Smith on the subject of missions in India and a certain small missionary from that land, though various essential differences between free will and predestination had previously cleft an impassable gulf between them.

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"Will wonders never cease?" marveled Oatka Center, and then decided unanimously that they certainly would not, for about that time it transpired that the children's party had enlarged into a neighborhood celebration, and that every man, woman, and child in the village was invited.

It had been Merry Christmas' first idea to invite the fathers and mothers



But, bless you! it would have taken half a dozen such kitchens to contain all the happiness and eager anticipation and radiant good-fellowship that were rampant there.

to come with their children; but then so many of her particular friends, like Mr. Bennett, and Mrs. Caldwell, and Miss Marthy Watkins, were not blessed with children that it seemed impossible to narrow the gates of paradise in that manner. And when it was once decided to light the fires in the long-disused parlor and sitting room, there really seemed to be no excuse for shutting out anybody; particularly as Uncle Lemuel developed a sudden mania for inviting every person who had a good word to speak for his "little sissy"; and who in Oatka Center hadn't by the time those two jolly weeks of holiday preparation were over? For, like an unconscious messenger of "peace on earth, good will to men," she had bobbed from the schoolhouse to the stores and back again, and presently into every house in the village, on one errand or another, trading happily with her one little talent, and leaving a trail of "Merry Christmas" in the air behind her.

Talk about your Marconi stations! There is nothing like a little human heart brimming over with good will, and bubbling with enthusiasm, to fill the air so full of Christmas spirit that not another thought can find a wave to ride on.

And so it happened that by the time the windows of the brown Perkins homestead were set cheerily ablaze, the snowy village streets were crackling and snapping merrily under the tread of many feet.

"I dunno as I'd orter 'a' shut up the post office and come," confided Miss Watkins to her neighbor, Mrs. Waters, as they creaked cheerfully along together at the end of the line, "when the six o'clock is so late and the mail hain't come in, but Merry Christmas she couldn't have it no other way. She said she was goin' to have Tom Bennett for Sandy Claus, anyway, and she'd just rig him up and have him fetch in the mail bags, too, and I could call the letters and passels out right there."

"That's a good idee," assented Mrs. Waters. "Trust that little gal for fixin' things around. She got Nate to shut up, too; and Job, he's even locked up

the Emporium. Both on 'em is about sold out, anyway. There hain't been such a time for Christmas tradin' in Oatka Center dear knows when. It's funny how that young one stirs things up. It's her bein' brought up in Injy, I expect, and a missionary's daughter, so. Why, the Baby Jesus and the shepherds and the wise men and the angels and all is just as real to her as if they was out in Lem's paster this minute, and she seen 'em. Makes you feel kind of green to have a young one come from heathen lands to teach us Christian folks about Christmas!"

"It's her takin' things so for granted," explained Miss Watkins. "I hain't give nobody much for Christmas in years, made an excuse of bein' in the office and not havin' time; and so I told her when she was in consultin' me about some of her Christmas doin's. Well, sir—the next afternoon in she breezed about two o'clock, and said she'd come to tend office for me till four, so I could go and do my tradin'; and land if she hadn't wrote a list, too, of some things that she'd heard my sister's young ones say they wanted." She stopped to laugh deprecatingly. "Well, Friscilla, you know I come and bought 'em, don't ye?"

"I bet that's how she's worked it with Lem," answered Mrs. Waters. "Took it for granted he was so decent that he was ashamed not to be. Lem's reely quite human these days. Do you remember his little gal, Loviny, that he lost years and years ago. Well, he's been and hunted out a little red dress she had, and he wanted me to get some cloth just that color and then to have Mis' Mosher make it up on the sly for Merry. It was for a Christmas present, but Mis' Mosher carried it up this mornin', and I'll bet she'll have it on to-night."

By this time the two women had reached the brown gate, and they stopped to admire the Christmas wreaths that shone against the lighted panes.

"Twenty on 'em there is, in all, and a little bell inside of each one," announced Miss Watkins. "Miss Porter

told me, though you can't see but twelve from here. The young ones made 'em yesterday to the schoolhouse. Say, there she is now—red dress and all!"

There she was indeed, little Merry Christmas, in her "Kissmas-colored" dress, with a wreath of holly crowning her brown braids—literally exploding with joy and delight into a hundred little ripples of laughter.

Unmindful of the cold air outside, she danced down the steps to meet the latest comers.

"Oh, goody!" she cried. "I was so afraid you'd be late, and I didn't want you to miss anything. The children are going to sing their carols first, and then we're going to have the tree and then the pop corn and candy. We made those this afternoon, for there really wouldn't have been any room to-night, there are so many here. And uncle has put a dish of apples everywhere he could possibly make room. He thinks apples are almost as healthy as pies. You just come this way to the back entry and hang your things up. Oh, listen! They're beginning now. Do you suppose I can ever get into the kitchen far enough to sing?"

She certainly couldn't if she had been anybody but her active little self, for everybody else seemed to want to get into that kitchen, too. And no wonder, for it was certainly an attractive spot, with its old walls wreathed with ground pine and gay streamers, and the lighted Christmas tree sparkling at the end, with a ring of happy young faces beneath it, lustily caroling their Christmas songs.

It was a mammoth kitchen, too, built in the days when the kitchen was really the living room and the heart of the house. But, bless you! it would have taken half a dozen such kitchens to contain all the happiness and eager anticipation and radiant good-fellowship that were rampant there; to say nothing at all of all the people who were disjoining their necks, and standing on each other's feet, and poking holes in each other's ribs, in their anxiety to hear the music, and see the decorations, and most of all to satisfy themselves for the

hundredth time that their own little Johns and Marys were far and away the handsomest children there, and the best singers, and that it was a wonder that all the other fathers and mothers weren't blushing with mortification at the painful obviousness of these facts.

First and foremost of all these self-complacent mortals was Mr. Lemuel Perkins, though he would have been the last person in the world to admit, or even to suspect, the fact; though nobody knows how else he could have explained the proud lift of his bristling chin whisker, or the positively vain-glorious swelling of his chest, as a certain little holly-crowned figure in a red dress was lifted mysteriously on high, and smiled radiantly upon the assembled guests.

"Santa Claus is rather slow to-night," announced the clear, childish voice, "because some of his pack came by mail, and the train is late; but my Uncle Lemuel will take his place till he comes. Oh, there he is, over by the sink. Will you let Uncle Lemuel through, if you please?"

Uncle Lemuel glanced wildly about, but there was no avenue of escape unless he leaped directly through the sink window. And in front of him a way was opening through that mass of humanity as miraculously as if Moses had been present with his famous rod. Even his growl of dissent was lost in the merry babel of voices around him, as a score of hands pushed him forward to where a little red-garbed figure welcomed him joyfully.

"I'll help you, uncle, if you can't see the names very well," she whispered. "But they'll like to have you do the calling out."

"Now, look here, sissy," he protested; "I ain't goin' to have no foolishness. Tom Bennett can rig himself up in a mess of red flannin and cotton batten' if he wants to, but I hain't goin' to make no show of myself."

"Mercy, no!" giggled Mary. "You aren't round enough for Santa Claus, anyway. You just call out the names. Here's one for Elder Smith, and Sarah

Haskell, and Deacon Caldwell. There are perfect heaps. Oh, hurry, do!"

Uncle Lemuel glanced at the first parcel, and a grim, "down-East" sense of humor triumphed.

"Waal, Elder Smith," he announced in stentorian tones, "I seem predestined to hand you over this passel, that's sure. I'll bet you can't prove it was my free will this time."

The burst of laughter that acclaimed this witticism was so intoxicating that Mr. Perkins promptly proceeded to make another, which was even more successful. Whereupon he yielded himself so thoroughly to the unaccustomed delight of public appreciation and approval that when the real Santa Claus finally came he was forced to divide his honors with a determined Uncle Lemuel, who evidently regarded him as an upstart and an interloper.

But bless me! nobody minded that, and least of all the genial Mr. Bennett, for two Santa Clauses and a Merry Christmas and half a dozen understudies and assistants were none too many to tackle that mass of Christmas presents and clear them out of the way in time for the games and other jollifications to begin.

It was a mercy that the pop corn and the molasses candy were all made beforehand, for otherwise the whole school, and their presents, and their teacher, and the tree, would have been stuck together in one huge and inextricable pop-corn ball; they barely escaped that fate as it was, just in the eating of those toothsome dainties. But blindman's buff and stagecoach and puss in the corner have their advantage in the line of keeping things moving and preventing you from being glued for life to your next neighbor if you chance to adhere in passing.

"Well, this is a real, right-down, old-fashioned Christmas party, 'same as mother used to make,' ain't it?" queried Deacon Caldwell jovially of the man next him, and then stopped suddenly, as he realized that that man was his time-honored foe, Mr. Perkins.

But Mr. Perkins had no thought for any ancient grudges just then.

"What's become of sissy?" he demanded sharply. "I can't spot her nowhere in sight. She was blindman along back, but she hain't playin' now."

"She must be in the parlor," suggested Deacon Caldwell kindly. "Like as not she went in to hunt up Em. They're great cronies, her and Em."

"No, she ain't," retorted Uncle Lemuel shortly. "She ain't there, nor in the settin' room, nor upstairs in the bedrooms. You don't s'pose she's been and took sick, somewheres, do ye?" he added anxiously. "Et too much stuff, or come down with that scarlet fever, mebbe?"

"Why, sho now, Lem!" cried the deacon sympathetically. "I'd hate to think so. But let's go get Em. Em's a master hand in sickness if need be."

"It'll be easy enough to find her by the red dress," said Mrs. Caldwell encouragingly as she joined the little party of searchers. But "upstairs and downstairs and in my lady's chamber" they looked, and no sign of the "Kiss-mass-colored" dress did they see.

"There's the cellar and the woodshed still left," comforted Mrs. Caldwell, glancing sidewise at Uncle Lemuel's grimly suffering face.

And just as they reached the back-entry door, a little figure in a red dress popped in from the woodshed entrance, a radiant little figure, that waved a lantern on high, and flung itself joyfully upon Uncle Lemuel.

"Where've you been?" demanded that gentleman, with the gruffness of relief. "We've been huntin' you from garret to cellar."

"Oh, I'm so sorry if you worried!" cried Mary penitently. "I never thought you'd notice. Mr. Bennett brought me a letter, you see, from mother—my Christmas letter—and of course I was dying to read it, and I couldn't find a single place that was quiet, so I took a lantern and went out to the woodshed."

"I hope you hain't took your death of cold," cried Mrs. Caldwell anxiously.

"Oh, no; I'm warm as toast," answered Mary happily. "And I've had the nicest news you ever knew. Father and mother and the children are all

coming back to America! Isn't that lovely? That's been the only drawback to this perfectly beautiful Christmas here—missing them all so—and now—just think! They're coming, too!"

"How do they happen to be comin'?" queried Mrs. Caldwell, returning Mary's ecstatic embrace.

"Why, it's on account of father's health. Father's not been very strong for a long time. But neither was I, and look at me now! He'll be all right as soon as he gets to Oatka Center, and eats enough pie and things."

"Oh, are they comin' here?" inquired Mrs. Caldwell, in a voice in which pleasure and surprise were mingled. Oatka Center had not yet forgotten that when Ellen Rumball chose to marry and go to India, she had done so in face of the threat that the Perkins doors would be closed to her henceforth and forever.

But Mary returned her gaze with wide-open, astonished eyes.

"Why, she didn't say Oatka Center," she cried. "But where else should they come? Why, mother loves Oatka Center better than any other place on earth, she always says. And father has no family at all. So Uncle Lemuel is our nearest surviving relative," she ended quaintly.

"Why, that's so, of course," agreed Mrs. Caldwell hastily. "How soon did you say they was comin'?"

"Right away, mother says. Isn't that grand? Maybe I won't even go back to school. Crescent Hill is lovely—for a school; but of course a real home, with Uncle Lemuel and the rest of my family, would be lots nicer. Oh, Uncle Lemuel, aren't you glad as can be?"

But the old man was gazing at her with dazed eyes.

"Was you—goin' back—to school, sissy?" he said slowly. "When?"

"Why, week after next, Uncle Lemuel. We've had a whole month, you see. But if mother is coming here to live, maybe she won't make me, and I can stay right along and bake pies for you all winter. Oh, goody, goody! I'm so glad that my toes are skipping round inside my shoes. Do come with me

while I go and ask Miss Porter what class she would put me in."

But Uncle Lemuel, muttering something about "the stock," stepped to the back door, and walked slowly out under the silent stars.

"Oh, he's going out to see if they kneel down," explained Mary happily, after a second of surprise. "I heard that the animals all knelt in their stalls on Christmas Eve; and he promised me that he'd go and look and call me if they did. But I'm afraid that he's too early. They don't do it till twelve o'clock, I think. I must run and tell him to wait."

Mrs. Caldwell laid a detaining hand upon her arm.

"I wouldn't bother him if I was you, dearie," she said. "Mebbe he'll find 'em now. It's Christmas Eve, anyhow."

For Mrs. Caldwell, down deep in her heart, was praying eagerly that the stars of Christmas Eve would lead Uncle Lemuel, as they had led the Wise Men long ago, to learn the lessons of humbleness and love by the side of a manger.

CHAPTER IX.

"Merry Christmas!" shouted a gay little voice, so close to Uncle Lemuel's ear that he turned suddenly and almost dropped the pen with which he was laboriously scratching upon a sheet of paper. "Merry Christmas! You were such a dear not to wake me up, but it is really scandalous, isn't it, not to get up early on my namesake morning? And you've been wanting your breakfast, I know. Aren't you nearly starved, Uncle Lemuel, honest?"

Uncle Lemuel permitted himself the luxury of a wintry smile.

"Pretty nigh," he assented. "I hain't had a bite to eat but half a pie, and three, four doughnuts, and two cups of coffee, and a little bread and butter. Before you get them buckwheats going I'll likely drop in my tracks."

Mary giggled appreciatively.

"Poor thing!" she cried, with tender mockery. "Well, I'll hurry. Wasn't Mrs. Caldwell a dear to mix these for me before she went home? And weren't

she and Mrs. Waters and Miss Watkins and Miss Porter perfect *angels* to stay and clear up the house for us? Oatka Center people are certainly the loveliest in the world, just as mother says. Why, uncle, what are you doing?"

"Oh, nothing," returned Mr. Perkins briefly; "just a-writin' a letter." He spoke as carelessly as if letter writing were a daily occurrence with him, instead of an event that was more nearly decennial. "You hurry with them cakes, sissy. I'm used to havin' my breakfast some time afore sundown, though I s'pose any time will do for them that's lived turned upside downward on Injy's coral strand."

This was a time-honored joke between them by now, so Mary giggled again, meanwhile beating her batter with a skillful hand and issuing directions about the table setting.

"Let's have it right over under the Christmas tree. I'm so glad they had to leave that! And you must put on your new cup and drink your coffee in it. See, I have my red chain on this morning. I didn't dare to wear my be-yoo-tiful red dress, but I'm going to put it on for dinner when we go to Mrs. Caldwell's. I'm so glad she's going to have Miss Porter, too—and Mr. Bennett. I was afraid they didn't have any nice place to go. And, oh, Uncle Lemuel, what's that box you're hiding in my chair? Another present? You dear! I'm going to open it right away!"

"You hold your horses, missy, till you get them cakes done," growled Uncle Lemuel.

In due time a stack of cakes that matched Uncle Lemuel's appetite was ready, and then the box was opened and the girl "began to sing," though "sing" is really a very polite word with which to describe the series of shrieks, squeals, and even whoops of ecstasy with which she greeted the consecutive appearance of six wonderful sets of hair ribbons.

"I shall wear them all!" she cried recklessly, and promptly proceeded to deck her neat brown braids like May poles with a series of fluttering bows—red, light blue, dark blue, yellow, white,

and, at the very end, two wonderful rosettes of exquisite pink, which were rivaled in color only by the tint of the cheeks above them.

"Oh, Uncle Lemuel!" she cried, in solemn rapture. "I feel as if I must have died and gone to heaven. I love pink so that it almost makes me ache to look at it. That's my only objection to being an angel—always having to wear white clothes and wings. Don't you think maybe, if I was very good, the Lord would let me have a set of pink ones for Sundays?"

But Uncle Lemuel's theology was not prepared for such imaginative flights.

"You'd better eat your vittles, sissy," he remarked dryly. "Time enough for choosin' your wings when you have them to wear. Coffee's kind of tasty this mornin'," he added craftily. "Wonder if it's the cup?"

"Let me taste yours and see," cried Mary, prancing eagerly around the table. "Yes, I believe it is. Oh, uncle, see what I've done—got a splash of coffee on your letter! I'll see if I can't mop it off. Why, uncle, it begins: 'Niece Ellen!' Were you writing to mother?"

Uncle Lemuel nodded.

"You see," he explained slowly, "Ellen and me, we had some words a while back, and I thought mebber she mightn't feel free—that is, I thought mebber she and Christie would feel freer to come and make their home with us for a spell if I wrote and invited 'em right away. I told 'em that the school was first class, and that I should start you right there with Miss Porter till they come. Do you like that idee?" he ended anxiously.

Mary embraced him rapturously.

"Like it?" she cried. "Oh, Uncle Lemuel, I like it so much I can scarcely speak! I never saw anybody that did such lovely things for people all the time!" She paused a minute, and then clapped her hands. "Oh, I know what you are!" she said suddenly. "We are twins, just as I said—for I am your little Merry Christmas, and you are the great, big Happy New Year that goes with me."

On Friendliness and Friends

By Edwin L. Sabin

SOMETIMES we come across a man who says that he does not care whether or not he has friends; that he can get along perfectly well without them. He says this, as a rule, to show his independence and self-sufficiency, and what a wonder he is.

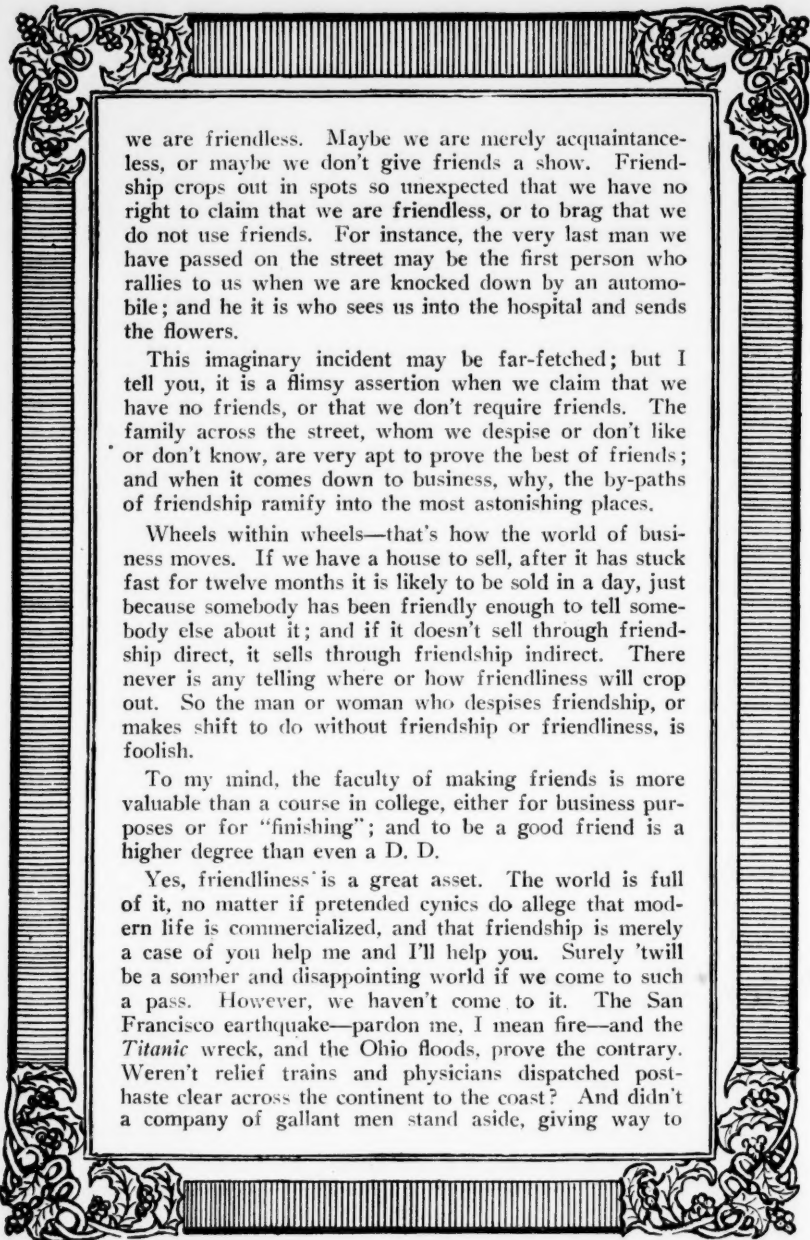
Well, he must be a wonder, if he achieves all without friends, and I, for one, don't believe him. It is impossible to get along without friends; we can't get along in any respect, either in society or in business, without friends. The friendless person—if such exists—is only half a man or a woman, and is at a standstill.

These self-made successes don't tell all they know. When we sift through their careers, we find that they have had help. Assuredly they have. That is nothing to be covered up, or of which to be ashamed; rather, it is something of which to be proud, for the faculty of enlisting friends is a gift from the gods.

"Self-made"? "Does not need friends"? Bosh—isn't it? If we take even the most sincere and honest and hard-working among the many "self-made" successes and trace them back to their origins, we are certain to find friends and help along their route. The first job may have been won through sheer persistence, or the luck of being on hand to fill a hole, or other circumstance of time, place, or character; but soon or late there is in evidence a friend or two, who recognized ability and lent a helping hand. The way to success in life is dotted with friends like milestones. They may be unknown friends, whose only indication is their deeds; but there they are, in the background at least.

Somebody has to be friendly enough to pay wages, and to give promotion, and to buy products, and to countenance all endeavor. These somebodies are not doing this out of charity; nevertheless, they are friends in need.

I suppose that there are some of us who think that



we are friendless. Maybe we are merely acquaintance-less, or maybe we don't give friends a show. Friendship crops out in spots so unexpected that we have no right to claim that we are friendless, or to brag that we do not use friends. For instance, the very last man we have passed on the street may be the first person who rallies to us when we are knocked down by an automobile; and he it is who sees us into the hospital and sends the flowers.

This imaginary incident may be far-fetched; but I tell you, it is a flimsy assertion when we claim that we have no friends, or that we don't require friends. The family across the street, whom we despise or don't like or don't know, are very apt to prove the best of friends; and when it comes down to business, why, the by-paths of friendship ramify into the most astonishing places.

Wheels within wheels—that's how the world of business moves. If we have a house to sell, after it has stuck fast for twelve months it is likely to be sold in a day, just because somebody has been friendly enough to tell somebody else about it; and if it doesn't sell through friendship direct, it sells through friendship indirect. There never is any telling where or how friendliness will crop out. So the man or woman who despises friendship, or makes shift to do without friendship or friendliness, is foolish.

To my mind, the faculty of making friends is more valuable than a course in college, either for business purposes or for "finishing"; and to be a good friend is a higher degree than even a D. D.

Yes, friendliness is a great asset. The world is full of it, no matter if pretended cynics do allege that modern life is commercialized, and that friendship is merely a case of you help me and I'll help you. Surely 'twill be a somber and disappointing world if we come to such a pass. However, we haven't come to it. The San Francisco earthquake—pardon me, I mean fire—and the *Titanic* wreck, and the Ohio floods, prove the contrary. Weren't relief trains and physicians dispatched post-haste clear across the continent to the coast? And didn't a company of gallant men stand aside, giving way to

the weaker and the more needy, on the steamer's deck? And didn't funds and supplies pour into Dayton—yes, contributions even from Europe? Was that not friendliness?—but in degree no higher than the friendliness of the passer-by who drops a nickel in the cripple's hat!

So we may not scoff at friends; and we ought to value the true and tried friend as an attribute beyond measure. When we sort our collection of friendly people, no matter how much they have served us, the true, unbiased friend is one among the hundred. Of course, the friendly person is but human; the real, true friend is almost divine.

Byron says: "Friendship is love without his wings." That is pretty good. It hits the nail on the head. He must mean that real friendship knows no tit for tat. Tit-for-tat friendship is not to be neglected, for even that helps over the rough places; but when we get down to the sentiment and comfort of the thing, the friendship that embodies "love without his wings" can fill a whole lot of emptiness. When you achieve such a friend, who is your other self, and frequently is your better self, stick to him, or her; and try to be worthy of him, or her. This friend may not materially help in business, or society; but he or she can make life mighty sweet.

Sometimes I think that there should be a league for the prevention of cruelty to friends. A real friend is the most readily abused personage that exists. When we get a real friend, we usually feel privileged to maltreat him, or her, to the extent of our abilities. Whenever we are "blue" or discouraged or troubled, we hie away to that faithful, long-suffering friend, and unload. That's what he or she is for, isn't it? Certainly. The real friend must be the foul-weather friend, according to tradition; and we make him, or her, so. If he or she sympathizes with us, and condoles and encourages and braces us up, then the friendly province has been accomplished and we neglect him, or her, until next time. What a life for a friend to lead! Gracious me!

Sympathy is so cheap that anybody can ladle it out. It is no test of friendship. "I never knew any man in my life who could not bear another's misfortunes perfectly like a Christian," remarks Alexander Pope—who

made this and many another pertinent comment. "I'm so sorry," "It's too bad," "Try again"—these are not the tests of true friendship; they are claptrap, and in a friend we should look for more. The true friend is the one who in a crisis rushes right into the breach and thrusts his arm through—yes, even stops it with his body, as in the hero tale of the broken dike.

By the way, are *you* such a friend?

Are you a friend to *your* friend? Or do you expect him to do it all, and when he—and by this I mean she also—some day seems to fail to toe the mark, do you indignantly abandon him? Some people regard this as the crowning office of friendship: to make the other party do the work, and when he has been worn out, to denounce him bitterly. Why, I have known of shocking cruelties to friends, practiced in just this manner—and after the same friend had been long overloaded besides.

A friend can do no wrong. Bear that in mind. When you realize this of him, or of her, then you are a good friend yourself. In the lexicon of friendship there is no "if." Friends don't deal in "ifs" and "maybes" and "perhapses." And I believe that the real friend should be tested with joys as much as with sorrows. Yes, more. These foul-weather friends may supply a need, and they are long-suffering, or they wouldn't be friends; but they ought to have the reward of a "Hooray!" as occasional change from the monotony of a "Too bad!"

Friendship is neither giving nor taking; it is sharing. And when you seek your true and tried friend, and proclaim your latest success, which is greater than his latest success, and descant upon your joy, which is greater—as like as not—than those his own joys apart from yours; and when he claps you on the back or grips you by the hand or—if a she—dances up and down, and exclaims, "Bully, old man!" or "Isn't that glorious!" and his—or her—face fairly shines, then may you know that you have a friend indeed, who is not limited to being only a friend in need.

By the way, are you such a friend, who can gladly be a sharer of prosperity, as of adversity?

The Cuckoo's Nest

By F. Roney Weir

ILLUSTRATED BY CLARENCE ROWE

JULIE PRICE watched her husband picking his way through the mud of the alley, and her heart yearned after him. He was so good and patient through all his bad luck.

He had come back from town a few moments before to tell her that he had lost his position as city salesman for a candy factory, and must start out to hunt up another.

Back in Creekville, where they had both been born and brought up, Gately had failed in law, and in love. Now, out in this bustling, Western city, it was the old story over again.

Sometimes he was too slow, and sometimes he was too honest; for Gately was nothing if not honest.

He had been thoroughly honest back in Creekville when he had offered her the remnants of the heart that Katherine Sawyer, his first love, had thrown away because of his failure to pass the bar examination. He had told Julie the whole story; had repeated all the bitter, biting truths that Katherine had hurled at him the night she gave him back his ring.

The interview had taken place at Katherine's mother's front steps, one Saturday night after choir rehearsal. Gately had stood, stunned and speechless, with "Anthems of Praise" under one arm, the hymnal and a bag of oranges under the other, while Katherine broke their engagement. She had said that her aunt, who lived in Milwaukee, thought it a shame for so good-looking a girl to throw herself away on a country boob, who would never have two dollars of his own to clink one against the other. The aunt had said that marrying for love was all right for

girls who couldn't do better; but that if Katherine had a mind to "cut loose" and come to her in Milwaukee, she should at least have a chance. And Katherine was going. Gately had then handed over the "Anthems of Praise," the hymnal, and the oranges, taken his ring, and gone away, absolutely sure that he could never live down that night; never rise above the sorrow and humiliation of it.

It was after Katherine had become Mrs. Samuel Tubb that Gately had laid the case before Julie, and had asked her to take the chance that Katherine had refused. Julie had thrown her arms around his neck, sobbing out her love for and belief in him. She had told him how willing she was to wait for a new love to come into being to take the place of that he had felt for the faithless Katherine.

Julie reflected with a smile that she had not been obliged to wait so very long. She and Gately had not been married three months when he was wondering what he had ever seen in Katherine Sawyer to admire, not to mention love.

After a while he really had passed the law examination, and had tried to make a living at the law in Creekville—and failed. Meanwhile Julie had worn an out-of-date coat, and had made her own hats, until they had scraped together enough money to get them out to the Pacific coast, where Gately had tried again—and failed. It was such hard work to get started in a big city. There was room at the top, or even halfway up the ladder; the struggle was down among those who, like Gately Price, still had both feet on the ground.



There was a sound like the snapping shut of a tobacco box with a stout spring, and a howl from Mr. Tubb.

About this time Julie's letters home had begun to suggest a prosperity that did not really exist. She could not bear to have Creekville saying that Gately Price would never get along, no matter where he hung out his shingle. She wrote her Aunt Jane that they lived on Summit Hill, in one of the select residence districts, almost next door to the Henrys. Mr. Henry was one of the wealthy and successful lawyers of the city, senior member of the well-known firm of Henry, Hultz & Hammond. She hinted at an intimacy with the Henry family, and spoke familiarly of "Mrs. Henry's little party gown of sea-green charmeuse, veiled in silver-embroidered white chiffon," as if that lady had allowed her to hook her up in the back.

What she did not tell Aunt Jane was that she had but glimpsed the green charmeuse party gown one day as its wearer tripped down the walk and disappeared into a waiting motor; that her own house, a two-roomed shack—remnant of pioneer days that had drifted and settled on the back of the yard across the street from the Henrys—opened directly on the alley; that Gately had been obliged to give up the law and sell candy in order to pay the expenses of even so humble a home.

She wasn't ashamed of it, or of Gately. She loved him, and believed in him, and was certain that some day he would come into his own. But she did not mean to give Katherine Tubb the satisfaction of congratulating herself upon getting out of a bad job.

Aunt Jane had sent a post-card snapshot of Katherine in her runabout, and a clipping from the society page of a Milwaukee paper, showing a sublimated Katherine, wearing an impressive velvet hat, and a bored expression.

Gately had scolded about the home letters.

"It doesn't pay to lie, Julie," he had admonished. "Keep truth on your side and save yourself embarrassment."

"But we do live neighbor to the Henrys, don't we?" Julie had persisted.

"Not that the Henrys are aware of. Next thing you know, some of our

back-home friends will float out here, expecting to be introduced to our set."

"At least I know Mrs. Henry's maid, Hilda," said Julie. "We meet often at the grocer's, and one day she told me all about their parrot. His name is Mr. Piper, and he says funny things, and sings snatches of songs, for all the world like an old man."

"We're advancing," mused Gately gloomily. "I have a circle of acquaintances among the one-horse grocers who buy rubber gumdrops and candy alleys for the school trade, and you—you know Mrs. Henry's maid, and her parrot! I presume you have detailed some of the smart sayings of Mr. Piper in your home letters, giving Aunt Jane to understand that he is a beloved old relative of your dear friend, Mrs. Henry!"

For a moment after Gately had disappeared in the direction of the downtown street car, Julie was undecided whether to finish the morning's tidying-up, interrupted by her husband's untimely return, or to sit down for a good cry. Then she saw Hilda, the Henrys' maid, coming, and postponed the weeping for a more convenient season.

Hilda had come to ask a favor of Mrs. Price. Would she be willing to go over at four o'clock and feed Mr. Piper? The Henrys were away, and Hilda had just received a telegram announcing the sudden illness of her sister, and begging her to come at once. She would be gone at least two days—perhaps longer. She had brought the key of the Henry house, hoping that Mrs. Price could find time to give Mr. Piper his rations.

Julie assured the girl that she would attend to Mr. Piper's wants to the best of her ability.

"And ven you gif him his crackers, be careful!" warned Hilda. "He bites somethin' awful if it iss a stranger round. It iss better you gif 'em on the toasting fork; other he take a pick right oudt your finger! I hate fierce to haf him bite you ven you so goot to help me oudt."

At four o'clock Gately had not returned, and Julie, in her best black



"He bit me! Good Lord! He bit me! Look at the chunk he took out of me!" He turned upon Gately. "Feed from your hand, huh? I guess so!"

gown, turned the key in the door of the Henry house and stepped into the spacious hall. It was really only a very comfortable, well-furnished residence, but to Julie it seemed palatial. To the right opened the big living room, to the left the dining room, while in front the wide stairs lost themselves in the upper gloom. It was really quite like an adventure, and if Julie had been in a happier frame of mind, she would have enjoyed it thoroughly.

A temptation assailed her to mount those stairs and peep into Mrs. Henry's wardrobe; to take a fold of that green charmeuse between thumb and forefinger. She was not even sure from the fleeting glimpse she had of it that it had been charmeuse.

But Julie's errand did not call her upstairs in Mrs. Henry's house, and she would not do such a shameless thing. Yet it was a pleasure to linger there in the hall and dally with the temptation. Why was it that Mrs. Henry had everything, and she and Gately nothing?

Well, at least, she and Gately had love, and, perhaps—who knew?—Mr. Henry might be a dreadful man; a tyrant who swore at his wife, or came home intoxicated—

A piercing scream, as of a woman in mortal agony, broke the stillness—fairly shattered it, in fact. Julie crinkled with horror. Then she remembered, and laughed tremblingly.

"Mr. Piper?" she called.

"You old darling! You old darling!" cooed a startlingly humanlike voice, followed by inarticulate chucklings of welcome.

Mr. Piper had undoubtedly been affected by the loneliness of the place.

What Julie did not know about parrots made her enter the presence cautiously. Perhaps parrots flew at strangers of whom they did not approve. Hilda had warned her of Mr. Piper's variability of temper.

She found him in the farther corner of the living room, as stationary upon his perch as a painted bird. And before she had finished the performance with the toasting fork, she was gasping with laughter. Mr. Piper was certainly a

versatile old party, with a rich and varied vocabulary.

She was still laughing when she opened the front door and stepped out upon the porch. But suddenly the laughter died in her throat as she gazed into the face of a smiling lady who was descending from a taxicab.

"I'm awfully glad to see you!" screamed Mr. Piper from within the house.

"And I'm glad to see you," responded the lady, evidently under the impression that it was Julie who was so "awfully glad."

The lady was extremely scant of skirt, but generously hatted and muffed, and she ran up the walk and clasped the paralyzed Julie in her arms.

"Kate Sawyer!" breathed Julie, and a voice from the house sang out, "Don't forget your boy! Don't forget your boy!" ending in a rollicking troll, "Gay sailor dog who stole the ship's log and flung it in the salt, salt sea."

"Who is so merry in your house?" demanded Katherine Tubb.

"Only Mr. Piper," faltered Julie, and added, hardly above a whisper: "Won't you come in?"

"Of course we'll come in. We couldn't find you in the phone book, nor in the directory; but I remembered mamma said you lived on Summit Hill. We wanted to see the hill, anyhow, and so we hired a taxi and drove up one street and down another, and, sure enough, I just happened to catch sight of you. Say, you have a swell place here!"

A look of sudden anguish filled Mrs. Tubb's eyes. Julie saw it, and it completed her downfall. She swung the door wide.

"Come in," she invited boldly.

Katherine turned toward the taxi.

"Come on, Sammy; it is my friend," she called sharply; and out of the taxi puffed a wizened old body, with swinish eyes, a white chin whisker, and a loosely flopping mouth. He waddled up the walk.

"My husband, Mr. Tubb."

Katherine introduced him with a shuddery fierceness. She seemed to re-



"Where is Hilda?" demanded Mrs. Henry politely.

sent him as an unpleasant accompaniment to her prosperity.

Julie brought them in and drew out two great easy-chairs for them. Katherine's eyes roved about the room covertly. She could scarcely conceal her astonishment.

"Gately must have done well in the West."

A pucker of discontent was visible between the brows underneath the rich hat brim.

"Fairly well," replied Julie nonchalantly.

She snapped up a blind to let in more sunlight and snapped another down to

relieve Mr. Tubb's blinking eyes from a glare.

"Fine place," mumbled the aged Mr. Tubb, puffing out his loose lips and staring about with none of the furtiveness of his wife.

Mr. Piper suddenly awoke.

"You're a wise old guy!" he chuckled, and added more irrelevantly: "Don't forget your boy."

"Is that a parrot?" asked Mr. Tubb politely, staring at Mr. Piper.

Julie was tempted to reply:

"Oh, no; that's a memorial tablet."

"I never liked 'em. Do you like 'em, ducky?" he inquired softly of his wife.



A half hour later Julie—a transformed Julie—swung round before the glass in Mrs. Henry's room.

Katherine hunched a spiteful shoulder.

"I don't know. I never had one!"

"Do you want one, dear?"

"Don't be a fool, Sammy," she snapped, and began to unpin her hat. Julie experienced a sinking of the heart. Why was she taking off her hat; she hadn't been asked to do so as yet.

"It hurts my head," explained Katherine, leaning back against her chair with a sigh of relief.

"Of course," cooed Julie. "Let me put it in the hall for you."

She was in a wicked daze. She didn't know how it was going to end, and, somehow, she didn't much care. She had a millionaire feeling that the house was really hers.

"Does your head ache, ducky?" drawled Mr. Tubb.

"Oh, shut up!" hissed his loving spouse, and the gentleman grinned, straightened up, and grasped his stubby beard with trembling, aged fingers, as Julie returned from putting away the hat.

"You're looking well, but thin, Julie," said Katherine. "How is Gateley? What time does he come from the office?"

"I—I'm—afraid he won't be home tonight," hesitated Julie. "He was talking of going down the Sound on a business trip."

"Oh, piffle, Julie! I just must see Gateley!"

"Your husband is—ah—ha—one of her old sweethearts, I understand," joked Mr. Tubb, but his wife did not smile. She only looked about the room and at Julie vindictively. The latter beamed upon the aged husband.

"Yes, indeed; back in old Creekville, where we were so happy and so poor, eh, Katie? It is astonishing, isn't it, Mr. Tubb, how soon young people forget their first loves!"

Mrs. Tubb's eyes were glassy with displeasure.

"I'm awfully disappointed, Julie; I wanted to see Gately." She let her gaze wander out of the big window toward the waiting taxi, and suddenly cried out: "Why, there's Gately now!"

Gately was nearly opposite the Henry steps which led up to the walk above the terrace. In a moment he would be by them. He was headed for the corner, where he would cross the road and seek the alley house at the back of the opposite garden. Julie ran out of doors and down the walk.

"What in the world are you doing in——"

His wife stopped him with a gesture desperate, though covert. Behind her were the Tubbs, gazing out of the window, before her sat the taxi driver, leisurely sprawling while the indicator pecked away at the Tubb fortune.

"Oh, Gately—if you love me, do as I bid you!" hissed Julie dramatically, in a desperate whisper. "First, put your arm around me and kiss me—and then keep smiling while I tell you—be sure to keep smiling! *The Tubbs are in yonder—* Oh, don't look like that—as if—as if some one had fired a pistol in your face! You'll give everything away!"

Gately assumed a ghastly grimace, and held it. Mrs. Tubb came tripping down the steps toward them with both hands extended. It was too late to explain save in broken sentences alternated with explanations suited to the ear of the guest.

"I knew you would be so glad to see Katherine.—The house is ours, remember!—Her husband, Mr. Tubb, is with her.—I'm in an awful scrape.—Mr. Tubb is with her——"

Katherine was upon them. She clasped Gately's hands in hers. She gazed deep into his eyes, hoping to find there some shadow of the old love—the old regret.

"Well—well—well!" he kept repeating over and over.

His smile had degenerated into a frozen grin that might mean pleasure at meeting his lost love once more, or might mean lunacy.

"You're completely tired out, aren't you, dear?" cooed Julie.

"Yes—yes—I am tired. I'm—so tired I—I don't half know what I'm doing."

"You must have a tremendous practice," sighed Mrs. Tubb, and the glassy, envious look came into her eyes again, and again Julie saw it, and gloried in her own wickedness. She knew the thought in Katherine's mind—that if only she had been true to Gately, all these things might have been added unto her without the awful incubus of the doddering Mr. Tubb.

The women introduced the men to each other, and Julie thrust Gately into another great chair, facing his guests, but, thoughtlessly, with his back to Mr. Piper.

"You are thin, too, Gately," chirruped Katherine. "I should hardly have recognized you if I had met you downtown. But you certainly have a lovely place here."

"Yes—er—it's—it—will do."

"Oh, I should have been so disappointed if I hadn't seen you!"

"Yes—yes—of course. I'm—ah—er—awfully glad to see you again. Are you—ah—staying in the city?"

"Merely passing through. In fact, we stopped over on the chance of seeing you and Julie. And the time we had finding you!"

"Horrible time! Horrible time!" chimed in Mr. Tubb. "Couldn't seem to run you down in the phone book. My wife was going to say how-de-do over the phone——"

"And then we hired a taxi——" continued Katherine, and Mr. Tubb jumped.

"And there he sits, ducky, with the bill running up. We must go pretty soon——"

"Oh, I just can't go yet a while, Mr. Tubb! What if the taxi does cost something? We are not paupers, I should hope!"

"No—oh, of course not—not yet—but we soon would be if I'd let her have her way, eh, Mr. Price? She's an expensive little baggage. Yes—believe me! She knocks a hole in a twenty-

dollar gold piece the quickest of any chicken I ever met."

His wife cut him short imperatively.

"We'll stay an hour yet."

"Why, certainly."

Gately seconded her motion largely. The chair he was in was heavenly. It was the first rest that he had enjoyed all day save for five minutes perched on the corner of a desk while he had tried to persuade the owner of the desk to take him on as a roustabout in a railroad office. "Certainly, don't hurry. Stay to dinner."

And then he met the horrified eyes of his wife.

It was too late; the thing was done.

"If we're going to stay to dinner, ducky, I'll dismiss the taxi——" began Mr. Tubb.

"You'll do nothing of the sort!" snapped Katherine. "How would we get back to the station?"

"Street car," said Tubb, and waddled toward the door.

"Sam, I will not go back on the street car! I'll stay with Gately and Julie a month first!"

"Don't forget your boy!" squawked Mr. Piper suddenly, and Gately sprang from his chair and wheeled about.

"What the——"

"You haven't spoken to Mr. Piper, and he's angry," chided Julie.

She was certainly among breakers, and these narrow escapes were getting upon her nerves.

"Oh! Of course—Mr. Piper—Hello, Mr. Piper! Hello, Mr. Piper!" He addressed the parrot, but he looked at Julie, and his gaze said very plainly: "You've brought this on yourself! Don't blame me."

Mr. Piper, after the manner of his kind, had, up to the present moment been silent, but he now broke into a fusillade of hee-haws, squawks, and raucous remarks.

"I don't like 'em!" reiterated Mr. Tubb, getting up and approaching Mr. Piper for a nearer view. "He ain't ugly, is he?"

"Oh, no—oh, no," Gately assured him. "He's very affectionate. He'll feed from your hand."

"Oh—oh, don't touch him!" cried Julie hastily, but Mr. Tubb had already made a practical test with his forefinger. There was a sound like the snapping shut of a tobacco box with a stout spring, and a howl from Mr. Tubb.

"He bit me! Good Lord! He bit me! Look at the chunk he took out of me!" He turned upon Gately. "Feed from your hand, huh? I guess so!"

"Oh, I'm so sorry, Mr. Tubb! Oh, so sorry!" mourned Julie, and it was a question who would burst into tears first, she or Mr. Tubb.

Mrs. Tubb, on the other hand, persisted in being amused at her husband's mishap.

"Served you right, Sam," she gurgled between paroxysms of laughter. "You'd no business to stick your finger in his face!"

Gately caught at a straw.

"No, there was the trouble; the old heathen couldn't stand it—your pointing your finger at him."

"Didn't he ever bite you?" demanded Mr. Tubb.

"Never. Really."

"Well, you point your finger at him and see if he don't!"

But Gately excused himself.

It was at this interesting moment that Julie caught, through the front window, the glint of a feather. It swung from a feminine hat, and the wearer was approaching the porch rapidly. The fear that it might be Hilda, returning prematurely, almost paralyzed the interloper. Then, in a flash, she saw that she had been mistaken. It was not Hilda; it was Mrs. Henry.

Julie fairly tottered. Her face turned a sickly, dying color. Mr. Tubb did not notice her emotion. He was too busy emphasizing what he would do if the parrot belonged to him. Katherine's eyes were still closed in uncontrollable mirth at Mr. Tubb's sufferings. But Gately saw, and was divided between pity for Julie and a desire to whip her for getting herself, and him, into this mysterious tangle.

Julie murmured something about going after a bit of surgeon's cotton for



"Where is your telephone, Gately?" demanded Mrs. Tubb. "I'll phone for a taxi, myself!"

Mr. Tubb's finger, and fled into the hall. Here she came face to face with the one-time mistress of the house.

Svelte, natty, red-haired, and ugly, yet absolutely beautiful, with the Frenchy grace and poise that Julie had so admired at a distance upon the occasion of the wearing of the green *charmeuse*. Then it had been the twinkle of an aigret above a mass of red-gold hair, the whisk of a slender green-silk figure into a waiting motor, a whirl, and a spurt of dust in the road; now it was a pair of inquiring eyes, a high-bred astonishment, an animated, correctly tailored, imperious interrogation point.

To further embarrass the cowering Julie, the lady was followed by her hus-

band, stern, gray, handsome, but fully as much at sea as was his wife.

From the living room came the hilarious notes of Mr. Piper, singing his sailor's ditty in utter indifference to the sound of another pained and angry voice telling what ought to be done with him if he got what he deserved.

"Where is Hilda?" demanded Mrs. Henry politely.

Julie, gazing at her, wondered how a woman with red hair, small eyes, and high cheek bones could be so awfully, horribly pretty. Was it her lips, her cream-and-rose complexion, her slender figure? Julie motioned her to follow to the kitchen, where they could not possibly be overheard. Mr. Henry, like Satan, came also.

Julie closed the door and faced them tragically—defiantly.

"I am the woman who lives in the alley behind the house across the road—that little house——"

"Oh!" breathed Mrs. Henry.

"Um-m!" said Mr. Henry.

"I have let pride and—and—and a desire for revenge get me into dreadful trouble. I'm—glad of this chance to—to—tell you everything, and ask you—to— Oh, I don't care what you do with me, but spare my poor husband! He's in there doing up Mr. Tubb's finger—Mr. Piper, you know——"

"Yes?"

Mrs. Henry was still nothing more than a beautiful question mark.

"Those Tubb people knew us back home. She—Katherine—Mrs. Tubb, was engaged to my Gately before I was. She threw him over because he didn't pass the bar examination, and she was afraid he would always be poor. I—I—wanted to show her how—how mistaken she had been!"

"I see," said Mr. Henry.

Mrs. Henry said not a word, but Julie was conscious of a certain subtle change in her expression, and blundered on in her explanations.

"And so you murdered Hilda and stowed her away in the coal cellar, and took possession of our house?"

Julie could almost have believed that the lady's eyes twinkled with something that was not displeasure.

"No, Hilda's sister was taken ill—she had to go, and she asked me to come over and see to Mr. Piper. No, I wasn't obliged to stow her under the coal. Katherine and her Mr. Tubb happened to be driving by in a taxi, looking for Gately and me— Oh—I was tempted—put yourself in my place! Poor Gately out tramping this wicked city for work! I in a house whose door lets on the alley! Katherine with her Tubb and her taxi—and just for a call, she said at first—but now she has her hat off, and Gately made a blunder and asked them to dinner— Oh, what shall I do? They'll go back and spread it all over Creekville!"

Julie buried her face in her hands,

and her shoulders heaved. But she came up again in a moment with set lips.

"If you will kindly motion Gately out, Mrs. Henry, we will slip away, and you can explain to the Tubbs that we are adventurers—housebreakers. I'd much rather they told back home that Gately and I had gone wrong, than that we are starving to death in a shack with the door on an alley!"

Mr. Henry came forward with a few inquiries, put in a stern, judicial manner. Somehow his questions comforted Julie. She told how Gately had tried the law—and—candy, and now was ready to work at anything—anything to earn a living!

Mrs. Henry had slipped off her hat and coat, and flung them across the kitchen table.

"Thirty-six bust?" she inquired, eyeing Julie's figure. "I thought so. You must dress for dinner. Come, Luther, dear; we haven't any time to lose. We must help these young people out." She buried her red head for an instant in his shirt front and bubbled forth amid laughter: "You'll make a perfectly swagger butler, Luther. Stour's will be the best place to order dinner."

She swung an arm over his shoulder and buzzed her directions into his ear hurriedly. Her little hand was as white as wax against the darkness of his coat.

"What sort of a man is your Gately?" she demanded, turning suddenly to Julie. "Will my husband's clothes fit him?"

"Oh, no," gasped Julie. "Gately's a head taller, and his shoulders——"

"Pshaw! What's the sense of having such an 'out-size' husband! Well, we'll do the best we can."

"Gately has on his good suit. He said this morning he must put his best foot forward—looking for work, you know. I think when he's rested, and brushed up——"

"Of course he will. But now that we are out to astonish the Tubbs, we must finish it up to a frazzle. What chamber did you show your guests into?"

"We haven't been upstairs. They only stopped to call—"

"Wait a moment. I'll run up and get into one of Hilda's dresses, and then show them into the guest chamber. Afterward you come to me in my own room—southwest corner. Hurry, now, and not a word—"

"But if Katherine should decide to stay a week?"

"In that case we should be obliged to discharge the butler. We'll have to chance that."

A half hour later Julie—a transformed Julie—swung round before the glass in Mrs. Henry's room. It wasn't the green charmeuse; it was a little white silk gown, with green velvet bands, and a tiny pearl ornament on a golden chain.

"Dainty, you know, but not too rich. Just what the wife of a rising young lawyer—practice just establishing itself, you know—would wear of an evening," mused Mrs. Henry. "Now don't worry about dinner; just concentrate yourselves upon entertaining the Tubbs. Make 'em laugh, make 'em sigh; keep the male Tubb away from Mr. Piper. If old Piper acts too badly, I'll carry him out, although he does love to help entertain of an evening."

Julie was still troubled, but her faith in this red-headed little witch of a woman was growing every moment.

In exactly an hour a stately, white-haired figure appeared in the hall doorway. Gately sprang to his feet.

"Oh—er—how do you do?" he gasped.

"Dinner is served, sir," announced the dignified gentleman in the doorway without the quiver of an eyelash.

"Oh—Ha! Yes—certainly! I—thought you were some one else."

"A butler?" gasped Mrs. Tubb. "Julie Price, do you mean to tell me you keep a butler?"

"Oh, just a man and one maid," replied Julie, with indifference.

"You hear, Sammy? And you thought me extravagant because I insisted on having a second girl!"

In the dining room Mr. Tubb's eyes followed the maid.

"Say, Price, you have some nifty people about you. That's what I call some hired girl! You certainly are pretty well fixed out here in this raw Western country!"

"Oh, yes—raw, of course, but very comfortable. Well enough for young people just starting, you know."

Between the fish and the roast the matter of the taxi came up again. Mrs. Tubb demanded that Sammy phone for another as he had been in such haste to dismiss the first. Sammy thought that they could "just as well slide down on the street car."

From within the butler's pantry the maid was making furtive signals to attract the attention of the butler. He did not see them, but Tubb did, and slyly winked a flirtatious eye.

"Where is your telephone, Gately?" demanded Mrs. Tubb. "I'll phone for a taxi myself!"

Gately grasped the sides of his chair and glared at Julie, who returned the glare helplessly.

The maid had at last succeeded in establishing communication with the butler. He disappeared through the pantry doorway, to reappear immediately by way of the hall, bringing a card upon a little lacquered tray. He presented the card to Gately.

"What's that for?" demanded Gately nervously.

"A gentleman wishes to speak to you a few moments on a matter of business when you are at liberty," replied the butler respectfully.

Gately read the gentleman's name. It was: "Send them off in your own car."

"Er—ah—what's that about phoning for a taxi, Katherine?" asked Gately, slipping the card into his pocket. "Don't trouble to phone; I'll send you in our car. What time does your train leave?"

It was the last straw.

"Thanks, Gately," murmured the now thoroughly subdued Katherine. "You have a machine of your own, too? Why, Gately, you must be richer than mud! I wonder you don't get Julie's Aunt Jane out here to live with you."

"What make is your machine?" asked

Tubb, suddenly alive with the universal masculine interest in automobiles.

"My machine——" began Gately slowly, gazing to Julie for help meanwhile. "My machine it not—er—exactly—a new one. It is——"

"Beg pardon, but James wants to know if you want the Alco or the run-about," murmured the respectful voice of the butler.

"The Alco, of course."

"Buh-huhh! I supposed the Alco was the very latest word in automobiles," burst forth Tubb.

"Oh—well—yes—in a way, but—I am very fastidious in the matter of—ha—my automobiles."

The maid was at Mr. Tubb's left hand with a plate of frozen pudding when the doorbell sounded with a sharp, imperative twang. She started so violently that the pudding plate telescoped Mr. Tubb's wounded finger, which, in its bandages, he held lonesomely erect.

"Ouch!" ejaculated Mr. Tubb, and then, perceiving the contagious alarm that seemed to run like an electric current from host and hostess to butler and maid, he demanded: "What's the matter—a fire?"

An earthquake shock would not have startled Julie more than the insistent summons of that bell. Callers for the Henrys were one of the perils that she had constantly in mind. The butler hurried to the door. The maid forgot her place in the intensity with which she listened to the mumble of voices in the hall. In his aberration of mind, Gately handed his own pudding to Katherine, and then snatched it back so suddenly that it popped off of the plate, and sat serenely on the tablecloth.

The word "telegram" uttered in the piping, boyish voice of the messenger was distinctly audible from the hall.

"By George, I wonder if that's for me?" said Tubb.

"How could it be for you?" sneered Katherine. "No one knows where you are."

"That's so, ducky; you're as sharp as a little tack, ain't you?"

The butler returned.

"Was it a telegram?" Gately inquired

blandly, with none of the perturbation exhibited at the ringing of the doorbell.

"A mistake," explained the butler. "It was a message for a person named Henry. The messenger seemed—somewhat confused."

After the Henry car had whizzed away with a tonneaul of Tubbs, the butler, the maid, the still bewildered, but well-dined, young lawyer, and the lady in white silk sat down to talk things over.

"I would like an explanation!" demanded Gately.

"You're a wise old guy!" murmured Mr. Piper, who was present at the conference.

"But not so wise as I'd like to be," declared Gately. "Julie, how did you get yourself into this scrape?"

Julie told the story again, adding the details that she had not been able to furnish before for lack of time.

"But what's the use of it all?" scolded Gately. "They'll tell Katherine's mother, and she'll tell all Creekville, and in due course of time Creekville will come out to make us a visit; then what's the answer?"

"Why, this," said the butler impressively: "Before Creekville has time to get here—you *must make good!*"

"I'm out of the running," groaned Gately, and slumped desperately and unbecomingly in his chair. "I can't even get a toehold!"

"Pshaw!" said the butler. "Brace up! I don't know how much of a lawyer you are, nor how hard a worker, but, somehow, I have received an impression that you are honest. Now I'll tell you what I'll do: I'll take you into the office. You may begin by making collections, and doing odd jobs—there is always an overflow of business with us—little affairs that we can't attend to—and, later, perhaps—but we'll let that rest for the present."

"Mr. Henry," said Gately with a trembling lip, "I've been tramping all day, trying, without success, to convince the public of my honesty. I didn't go about it in the right way, I see. The way to convince a man that you are honest is to steal his house and lot."

Efficiency in the Home

BY *Anne O'Hagan*

Author of "The Awakening of Romola," "Monseigneur," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY LAURA E. FOSTER



BREATHES there a man with soul so dead, he never to his wife hath said—"something concerning her lack of system in the management of her house? If such there be, he should receive a prize of great worth in the husband class at any county fair enterprising enough to add to its vegetable and cattle exhibits the vastly more interesting one of human beings in their various human capacities. But any congress of average wives of average men would sadly declare that there could be no contestants for such a prize.

Every married man, at some time in his career, has told his wife that if "business" were run on the careless and haphazard principle, or lack of principle, on which she runs her house, banks would go under, mercantile houses fail, railroads collapse, mines close their tunnel entrances, and civilization cease. Every married man, thwarted in his effort to find his tobacco pouch in the place in which it does not belong, but in which he dimly thinks that he left it last night, tells his long-suffering spouse that her gift for misplacing things amounts to a perverted genius. Every man, catching an unexpected, infrequent glimpse of the family ash or garbage pail on its way to the collector's wagon, has said to the patient partner of his sorrows:

"Gad, I think enough stuff is wasted

in our kitchen to support two or three families! If business were run in the way you run your housekeeping, my dear, the nations of the world might put up their shutters!"

Every husband, no matter how amiable and considerate in the main, has his periods of declaring that the disorder of his wife's desk—in which he has been looking for something that he ought never to have left there—is a fearful commentary on the higher education of modern women; if any mercantile house kept its correspondence in such helter-skelter state, it would last about ten days!

"Mary, did you send my clothes to the tailor's this morning? You forgot! Well, you are a continual marvel to me! I didn't ask you to carry them there, you know—I merely asked you to telephone to him to send for them. If I ran the office as you run the home, my dear—although you are a very good woman, and I do not wish to be too hard upon your single shortcoming—we should spend our declining years in the almshouse!"

And then John strides magnificently to the telephone, and loudly gives the order to the tailor himself.

"What was our meat bill last month, Mary? You don't remember? *About* thirty dollars a month, you *think*! Say, my dear, how long do you suppose I should last in the dry-goods business if



"I saw that old mother of hers going out of the basement door the other night with a large bundle under her arm."

I *thought* my bill for heat in December was about seventy dollars? Don't you *know*? I asked, because Kraus was telling me to-day that his wife never spends more than sixteen dollars a month on meat—and they have four children to our three. I have suspected that there was a great deal of waste in the kitchen. Are you sure that Dinah's relatives aren't living off us? I saw that old mother of hers going out of the basement door the other night with a large bundle under her arm. Are you sure Dinah isn't feeding her entire tribe on your marketing? You ought to know how much meat we consume each month. You ought to be able to gauge dishonesty in the kitchen by the size of your monthly bills. I assure you that if there were a marked discrepancy between my clerical staff's use of stationery one month and that of the preceding month, I should know that there was a leak somewhere, and I should stop it! You would find that it paid if you could introduce a little system into your household management."

And so on, and so on. They all do it, the best and kindest and even the wisest of them. Now and again, the curse descends upon them, and like the Ancient Mariner, they cannot be free of it until they have uttered all this preposterous nonsense about woman's inability to cope with her job. Nay, more, and worse—the curse descends upon them in their unindividual capacity, and they write long, scolding screeds about the waste and mismanagement in woman's department of existence. And it is not always the husband, actual or potential, who scolds and scolds, declaring that woman has been the one slovenly element in the otherwise exact, orderly universe; sometimes women, who ought to know better, talk that arrant rubbish.

When the speech is made privately, from husband to wife, which is doubtless the most frequent form of its delivery, the answers are as many as are the temperaments of the ladies harangued about their shortcomings. There is the crushing response of utter silence—the response of the seasoned

and experienced woman, who says to herself: "Oh, this has come around again, has it? Well, let him rid his mind of it, and we will go on comfortably afterward. It was about due."

There is the tearfully argumentative reply of the less experienced woman. She "is sure that she tries to do her best," and "it isn't her fault that meat is so dear," or that "vegetables are so poor," or that "servants are so ungrateful," or "that we had so much company last month," or that "Bridget knew how to open the wine cupboard all the time." Of all responses, this is the weakest; it admits the fault, and attempts to justify it upon unjustifiable grounds.

There is, of course, the slanging resort. If one is on sufficiently cordial and comradely terms with one's husband to laugh at him even when he has mounted that particularly high horse of woman's inefficiency in her own department, the air may be soon cleared, and peace and harmony restored.

But the proper, the crushing, the final answer is twofold. In the first place, it is possible to say—tolerantly, judiciously: "Yes, I run the house somewhat haphazardly; all women probably are somewhat inexpert, somewhat inefficient, even in their familiar job of house-keeping. But the reason is not that they are women. It is that they are human beings. They are inefficient to match the men, and on the whole they, with infinitely less expenditure of time, money, and red tape, conduct their business of making their homes livable better than men—their husbands—conduct theirs of making towns, cities, countries, and occupations livable."

Let no wife, who has hitherto writhed in silent shame under the marital accusation that she was wasteful, careless, unsystematic, fear any longer to answer as above, boldly and securely. For there has been published by an investigating gentleman a work on "The Price of Inefficiency," which will bear her out in anything she may choose to say concerning the universal quality of the traits that her masculine critic on the hearth periodically denounces in her

as peculiarly feminine—or it may even be, as peculiarly her own!

For example, Mr. Frank Koester, the investigator whose conclusions have so neatly polished and sharpened the weapon for woman's hand in this contest, shows that we, in America—that is, the masculine “we”—have, for more than a generation, been wasting fifty million dollars and fifty lives a year by forest fires that we might learn how to control and prevent. The fifty millions of dollars cover only the loss in merchantable forest timber, but the loss in young growth is vastly more.

Over a billion cubic feet of natural gas, the best, cleanest, and cheapest of fuel, is wasted every day in the United States—enough to supply it to every city of over a hundred thousand population. In the manufacture of coke—a masculinely managed industry—over twenty-two million dollars a year is wasted in lost gases, and about the same value of sulphate of ammonia. An incalculable sum is wasted each year by the failure to utilize a thirty-nine-million-dollar supply of peat beds as fuel. The tidy little sum of six hundred million dollars a year is computed to be wasted in non-utilized water power. The continued failure to erect proper levees and dams costs the country two hundred and thirty-eight million dollars a year in freshets and floods. Each year careless agricultural methods cost the country five hundred million dollars through soil erosion, six hundred and fifty-nine million dollars through failure to dispose of noxious pests and insects, one hundred million dollars in losses to live stock through rats, mice, wolves, and other predatory animals.

Another seven hundred and seventy-two million dollars is lost to the community through the failure to cope with preventable industrial diseases—that is, diseases consequent upon labor in certain conditions that might be changed. Taking a human life at the figure at which the government estimates it—seventeen hundred dollars—two and a half million dollars a year are wasted in preventable coal-mine disasters, and about ten times as much in preventable

deaths and injuries in railroad disasters.

In this connection, it is interesting and illuminating for the inhabitants of the land of the free and the home of the brave to know that the “expectation” of life, as computed by unsentimental life-insurance societies, is ten years less in the United States than in Germany! Three hundred millions a year are wasted in lax government administrations, twenty-five millions a year in handling the mails, two hundred and fifty millions a year in fire losses to buildings, and four hundred millions a year in the portion of public water supplies used in fire fighting!

Surely any woman who can memorize even short portions of Mr. Koester's book has her arrow ready-tipped for her husband when next he begins to compare the waste and inefficiency of home management with the economy and exactness of masculine affairs!

Yet, since such sums are apt to be stunning rather than clarifying, and since the community's collective loss of seventy trillion dollars or thereabouts is less hard for a man to endure than his individual loss of eighty-four cents, it may be even better for the wife who wishes to argue that “big business” is scarcely more exact than she is in her housekeeping to arm herself with some simpler illustrations.

That was what Elaine did when she had borne as long as seemed to her good her Lancelot's diatribes against her laxness of method as contrasted with business system. At the end of one month, she approached him, notebook in hand, smile upon her face.

“Would you like to hear some statistics that I have been collecting, dear?” she asked, with wifely politeness.

Lancelot didn't seem to be particularly in the mood for statistics, but he yielded.

“Would you like to know how much time and money I spent in inducing Moneypacker's to send me the goods I ordered ‘special’ on the third?” she inquired, turning to her notes. “I spent seventy minutes. That means three telephone calls of over twenty minutes



Two men, adorned with many gilt letters as to their caps, and bearing pails, cloths, chamois, polishes, and pastes, arrived at her home every Friday morning.

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each. I called up Moneypacker's early on the morning of the fourth, to tell them that the things ordered for the evening of the third had not come. I got the Moneypacker central.

"'One moment, please,' she shut me off as I began my tale of woe.

"A new voice saluted me at the end of three minutes—it was the camp-out-fitting department in which I had ordered the goods.

"'One moment, please,' said a voice there; and at the end of five I was asked whether I knew the name of the young lady who had waited upon me.

"I did not know it, but after about eight minutes the guilty person was found. She said that she had not promised the goods definitely.

"Well, she had no right to promise them. The leggings were out of stock—we had only the samples. We shall be obliged to order them special for you—and, anyway, she ought not to have promised them. They will be delivered to-day surely.'

"And they weren't.

"I called up on the late afternoon of the fourth. Harold was waiting to go to camp.

"The same performance, with 'One moment, please,' as the day before, followed, after a long interval and much switching of the connection, by extreme amazement that I had not received the order yet. A long delay; then the statement that the goods had been sent out, and that the department would investigate.

"On the morning of the fifth I tried again, and was cheerily told that everything was all right—the goods had been sent to Brownsville instead of to Bronxville! But they had finally been returned from Brownsville, and were due to arrive in Bronxville by the next delivery.

"Orderly business methods, those of Moneypacker's, aren't they? Fine efficiency! How much do you suppose he spends annually in paying salaries to people whose only use is to correct the mistakes of his system?"

Lancelot, of course, gave it as his opinion that such failures of system in

the business world were rare, but the triumphant, record-keeping Elaine had further data with which to drive him to confusion. It is Elaine's province to issue the checks for the monthly bills, and, with a happy smile, she now produced two canceled checks.

"You see these?" she inquired.

Lancelot seemed almost afraid to answer the question, as if he suspected that it might tend to incriminate and degrade him, but he finally admitted that he saw the two checks. They bore the date of the eighth of the preceding month, and were made payable, both of them, to the local gas company. One was for seven dollars and the other for twenty-four. Lancelot gazed from the incriminating slips of paper to his wife.

"How the dickens do we manage to burn twenty-four dollars' worth of gas in a month?" he demanded belligerently. "And why did you let two months' bills accumulate?"

"Don't go on, dear," counseled his wife sweetly. "You'll be sorry by and by. I, too, when I had the housekeeping bank book balanced the other day, and when I was going over the returned checks, was sadly concerned about the size of the gas bill and about why I had forgotten it, and also about the mystery of my issuing two checks to the company the same day.

"I consulted the receipt file, and there was the gas company's acknowledgment of the payment of seven dollars for gas consumed in January. But there was no polite recognition of any payment of twenty-four dollars. I sat and stared stupidly at the two checks for some time. Then I consulted the stubs in my check book. There was a stub recording the payment of seven dollars on February eighth to the gas company, and there was another stub recording the payment on February eighth of twenty-four dollars to James McSelling & Co.

"I went to the file again and consulted James McSelling's receipts. Sure enough, there was a receipt for twenty-four dollars in payment of our January account—and the receipt was dated the

ninth of February, indicating that the check had been sent on the eighth. But there was no returned check made payable to James McSelling & Co.

"Don't interrupt, dear! I see the question forming on your lips—didn't it occur to me to look at the indorsements? It did finally. And it is perfectly true that the check which, on its face, directed my bank to pay the local gas company twenty-four dollars bore on the back the indorsement of James McSelling & Co.

"You see, of course, what had happened. I had most carelessly and reprehensibly, as I sat toying with the monthly bills, twice written the name of the gas company on a check; but I had sent the second check to the firm to which we owed the twenty-four dollars, and not to the concern to which I had made it out. That was absent-minded of me, and horribly wrong and unbusinesslike and unsystematic, and a dismal commentary on woman and the higher education and everything else that you please. Granted. But will you kindly tell me what you think of James McSelling's bookkeeping department?

"After all, I have a dozen things to attend to even during the hour when I sign checks for the monthly bills, and Mr. James McSelling employs his bookkeeping department to have no other thoughts except bookkeeping during the hours of their employment. Yet they continue my mistake. I inclose with their bill a check made out to the local gas company of another district; the bookkeeper sees, I suppose, that the amount tallies with the amount of the bill, and concerns himself no further with the matter. He stamps merrily across the back of the check the indorsement of James McSelling & Co., and the check to the order of the Bronxville Gas Company is deposited to the credit of McSelling & Co.

"And did the tellers at McSelling's bank notice the discrepancy? I always supposed that they were employed to have falcon eyes for discrepancies in checks, and to have minds purged of all other interests during a certain number

of hours a day! That being so, don't you think it interesting that of all who handled the check in McSelling's bank, not one noticed the mistake in the indorsement? And then the check went to the Clearing House—'prior indorsements guaranteed'—and it passed through the Clearing House back to our household-account bank, and eventually back to us. And nobody noticed anything queer about it. Fine, systematic, businesslike methods, aren't they?"

Lancelot examined the two checks, evidently in search of some explanation of the confusion that would not be derogatory to the claims of business houses to unerring exactness. But none was forthcoming, and he said, somewhat weakly:

"Well, you must admit that the original mistake was yours. You really ought to be more careful, and keep your mind upon what you are doing."

"Like McSelling's bookkeeper, I suppose!" exclaimed Elaine scornfully. "And all those alert young men in the banks!"

"After all, that sort of thing probably doesn't happen once in a decade," went on Lancelot, "with banks and business houses, while with women and their housekeeping accounts—well, you know what a muddle you are generally in, and what a muddle most of your feminine friends are generally in."

"These are the records of one month that I have here before me," pursued Elaine imperturbably. "We will now take up the question of Moneypacker's account. In December I did a little Christmas shopping there. The bill was for six dollars and some cents. I paid it early in January, having by some agreeable miracle enough money left in bank to settle the smaller bills. I also returned a *fichu* that I had bought originally for Dinah at the modest cost of a dollar, and that I didn't give her, and I told them to credit the sum to my account.

"February first brought me a 'bill rendered' from Moneypacker's for six dollars and some cents. I tried to remember whether I had a receipt or not, couldn't find one, but let the thing slide,

the amount being small, and I being sure that it was merely some clerical oversight. The middle of February brought a note, if you please, to the effect that Moneypacker would esteem it a favor if I would pay the six dollars and some cents, which, the amount being so small, had doubtless escaped my attention.

"I sat down, full of wrath, to write a crushing retort to Moneypacker, but Ned came down with the croup even as I began the note, so I let it go for the time, and forgot all about it later. March first brought the same old bill. I wrote to Moneypacker, and received a note saying that they had no record of any payment or of any credit for goods returned.

"I was a little alarmed—I still held your unsophisticated theory that 'business' is run without sloppy, human blundering, with automatic precision. So I hied me to the bank—yes, Lance-lot, it is perfectly and reprehensibly true that I had not had the bank book balanced since the middle of December!—and I demanded to know if there was a check drawn by me to the credit of Moneypacker on such and such a date in January. There it was, Lance—my beautiful, corroborative check, with Moneypacker's prompt, even immediate indorsement, on the back.

"I went home singing hosannas in my heart, and wrote again to Moneypacker. I also referred him, for information about the credit, to the return slip, dated and numbered so and so, and signed with such and such initials, which I held. I was even irritated to the extent of suggesting that it would be easier for me to close our account than to be bothered in such a way with careless bookkeeping. Whereupon I received a polite little receipt and a polite little note from Moneypacker, hoping that an explanation that didn't explain would be satisfactory. In this case, you see, there was no initial mistake to be chalked up against me, the unsystematic, slipshod housewife!"

Lancelot feigned a deep interest in the evening paper at this point, and Elaine, kindly informing him that her

month's record of mistakes and annoyances, gleaned from her own tiny personal experience, was by no means exhausted, but that she would desist if he really wished to read, closed her notebook, smiling happily. Though her spouse was not yet ready to admit that there was as great and as reprehensible carelessness in business as in house-keeping, yet she knew that she would hear refreshingly less on the subject of efficiency in the home in the future.

But neither statistics compiled and memorized from the great tomes written on the cost of public, masculine inefficiency, nor the recital of private feminine experiences with the business methods of business houses, is quite such an eye opener to the faultfinding man of the house as the simple expedient of letting him live for a while in a systematically run abode. Generally Mary weakens; pity and remorse stir at her heart, and she cannot put the experiment through to its logical end. But where she is made of stern enough stuff, John may be taught a lesson that will keep him silent forever on the advisability of applying business methods to housekeeping. One Mary, growing suddenly weary of discourse on the subject, turned upon her marital critic, and exclaimed:

"Very well; let us put the home on an efficient basis! I am willing if you won't grumble at the expense."

"The expense?" thundered this particular John, trying to disguise dismay in noise.

"The expense," replied Mary firmly. "The efficiency you like so much to hold up to my admiration in your office, and in shops and business enterprises, is the result of specialization in work. You have a highly trained corps of special workers—I have two haphazard girls to help me. But I'll put the house on a business basis, if you say so."

"I do say so," retorted John, catching his breath after the awful suggestion of added expense. "It will be cheaper in the long run."

"You never, I suppose," suggested Mary, "ask your office boy to do your



When Billy was ill, there was a trained nurse on the premises almost as soon as the physician.

secretary's work, or your secretary to do a little charring and cleaning?"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed John. "The offices are cleaned by men and women and vacuum cleaners in the employ of the management of the building."

"Exactly," said Mary, with satisfaction. "Your secretary doesn't have to do anything but the work for which she was hired?"

John grudgingly admitted this to be the case.

"Well, dear, we shall have an efficiently run home, adopting the same excellent principles of specialization and division of labor that prevail in the office," said Mary, with much satisfaction.

And forthwith John began to learn something about efficiency in the home. His education began with the morning baths. In the happy-go-lucky past he had had the right of way in the bathroom at whatever hour he arose, Mary and Billy, who shared the same bath—this was a middle-class family—taking their tubs whenever they could. Now a schedule was posted; John's reservation in the bathroom was from seven-thirty until seven-fifty. The first morning he overslept, he fumed for twenty minutes while his son and heir was being bathed, and then had an altercation with the housemaid who, armed with mops, brushes, and cloths, was waiting, determined to enter as Billy emerged. Eight-ten until eight-twenty-five, she informed him succinctly, was the period allotted for cleaning the bathroom in the new order of existence.

"I seem to be low on dress shirts, Mary," stated John, eating a lukewarm breakfast at a solitary place laid on the breakfast table the first morning he failed to appear at the matutinal meal at its designated hour of eight-fifteen. "Will you order me one or two readymades to-day, to last until Linkins can turn me out some new ones?"

"I'm awfully sorry," said Mary pleasantly, as she passed, housekeeping book in hand, toward her morning conference with the cook, "but there is no period to-day or to-morrow when I am free for any shopping."

John stared. Then he reddened. Then he took too large a swallow of lukewarm coffee, said something semi-profane and semiarticulate, and passed from the house without kissing Mary good-by.

John suffered the embarrassment of bringing a man unexpectedly home to a dinner of hash—hash unrelieved and unadorned, hash unatoned for by any dream of a salad or glory of a dessert, hash unmitigated by a celestial soup, or a heavenly entrée. It was perfectly good hash, of course, and the guest ate it with courteous relish, but not so John.

"Didn't I telephone you in plenty of time for you to have ordered something else?" he demanded hotly of the wife of his bosom when the unscheduled guest had departed.

"I told you we were having a plain dinner," stated Mary unemotionally.

"Yes, you've often said the same thing in the past, but you have always had something to redeem the plainness—grapefruit, or soufflé, or something."

"We had the dinner scheduled for to-night," replied Mary calmly, taking up her book. "I think your friend will find life sustained until breakfast. Excuse me if I read now, will you, please, dear? I am to devote one hour this evening"—looking carefully at her watch—"to this book of Pierre Loti's. Do you know, John, you were right about the advantages of system? I have a great deal more time for reading now that I have made housekeeping an exact science."

John went out to the club then, and lost money in a sullen game of bridge, played with the larger part of his mind upon Mary and her hideous literalness.

In the new home, organized for efficiency, expenses mounted in the way forecast by Mary. Instead of the sloppy Mrs. Flaherty from the Hollow as weekly assistant with the cleaning, Mary called in the Acme House and Window Cleaning Agency; and two men, adorned with many gilt letters as to their caps, and bearing pails, cloths, chamois, polishes, and pastes, arrived

at her home every Friday morning. Mrs. Flaherty had required much supervision; these men proclaimed that they had no need of it. They knew their business; they did not need the housewife's careful eye upon dark corners to induce them to sweep properly; they did not leave windows dingy, brasses smeared, gas globes dusty.

To be sure, they were forty cents apiece an hour, whereas the late incumbent had been only a dollar and a half a day. It required only half an unsupervised day on their part, however, to reduce the house to glittering order; and perhaps John would have borne without comment the weekly charge of three dollars and twenty cents had not the port decanter been mysteriously emptied one Friday, and had not his silver christening mug disappeared another.

"Of course, they'll pick up things if you don't watch them," he growled to Mary. "You don't suppose that the Acme House and Window Cleaning Agency has a set of Chevalier Bayards in its employ, do you? Of course, you've got to watch."

"Well, if I have to be on hand myself, I should prefer Mrs. Flaherty, whose work has to be overseen, to the Acme men whose morals have to be spied upon," said Mary.

And they went back to the dollar-and-a-half-a-day dame.

When Billy was ill, there was a trained nurse on the premises almost as soon as the physician. His father was alarmed at the sight of the hospital uniform when he came home from the office—was the boy so very sick, he asked Mary in an anxious whisper.

"No," said Mary calmly; "he will be about again in a few days, the doctor says. But I think there's nothing sillier than for a woman with no training at all to try to do any nursing. For Billy's sake and for my own I have engaged a nurse. I had scheduled the next few days to devote to spring sewing, and had my seamstress engaged. Really, it

seems much wiser to go on according to plan. I suppose," she added pointedly, "you were not thinking of changing your office schedule for this week on account of Billy's attack?"

When John wanted music in the evening, the simple, old-fashioned sort of music that Mary had been in the habit of giving him and Billy, she "declined to oblige," with serene politeness, and suggested that since the household did not boast one really well-trained musician, John should buy a piano player of advertised excellence. It was, she declared, a pity that slipshod amateurs should usurp the place of a thoroughly scientific piece of mechanism. It was then that John capitulated.

"Mary," he said, "if I admit that I have sometimes talked like an ass in regard to the standardizing of woman's work in the home; if I admit that I think now that there must be one universally or, as I hitherto said, scatteringly busy person, whose labors must sometimes seem haphazard, and that that person is the feminine head of a house; if I confess, humbly and repentently, that housekeeping is an art in which strict accuracy is undesirable, since the home is not primarily a reform school or a house of correction; if I declare myself in favor of elasticity rather than of rigidity in housekeeping; if I say, with all wise men, and with all women wise or not, that whereas business is run for one specific end—namely, money—the home is run for the happiness of a group of diverse persons with varying needs and desires; if I declare myself convinced that she is the best housekeeper who does a great many different things all fairly well, and makes a half dozen different people fairly comfortable and contented—if I speak thus handsomely, what will you do?"

"I? Oh, I will go and play you and Billy something," replied Mary, gentle in her triumph.

And she played them, crooning as she played, "Home, Sweet Home."





His Good Name

By J. J. Bell

Author of "Wee Macgregor," "Courtin' Christina," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY L. A. SHAFER

THE great liner was nearing the end of her long voyage. The dawn of another day would see her slowing into port. Dinner in the grand saloon was just over. It had been a merry repast. There had been much hearty laughter, many congratulations and expressions of good will. A record passage had made the possibility of Christmas Eve on shore a certainty. Even passengers not homeward bound caught the spirit of the majority, and joined in the jubilation of the hour.

The weather was calm and, for the season, unusually mild. A full moon shone from an almost cloudless sky. A score or so of passengers, eschewing the luxurious shelter of music lounge or smoking room, paced the spacious deck.

Against the rail, in the shadow of a lifeboat, a man and a woman stood in converse. His bearing was that of a young man, but even in the half light his dark countenance betrayed a harsh melancholy that suggested middle age at least; however, he was a little over thirty. Her years were less difficult to guess. She had the mouth of a girl and the eyes of a woman; she was slimly, though not delicately, formed; her face was gentle—gentle in both senses of the word. In her early twenties, you would have said.

She was regarding him with a somewhat puzzled look.

"You say that you are eager, yet not glad, to be home, Mr. Garth——"

"I didn't say *home*, Miss Nevis," he interrupted. "I said England."

"I beg your pardon," she murmured, a little stiffly, and turned away her eyes.

"Forgive me," he exclaimed, with compunction. "I was rude—and not for the first time. I sometimes wonder how you have put up with my rudeness and bitterness all those weeks. But, believe me, you are the last person in the world to whom I would willingly be rude or bitter. Only the word *home* is like a sting to me."

He sighed and gazed down at the rushing water.

"Ah!" she exclaimed softly, and turned again to him. "How stupid, how unkind I have been, to talk of it so often! I ought to have understood or guessed——"

"How should you? What was I to you but an irritable individual who took undue advantage of your good nature and patience?" He faced her once more. "Miss Nevis, I wish I could tell you what your acquaintance—I daren't use the word friendship—has meant to me since we left Sydney. You knew nothing of me, and yet——"

"You knew nothing of me, Mr. Garth." She smiled faintly. "But are you really such a suspicious character?"

He gave a short laugh.

"Possibly you have noticed that I have hardly spoken to any one on board save yourself?" he said.

"I have sometimes thought that more variety in the way of companionship might be good for you."

"And for yourself? I am well aware that I have been monopolizing you. You ought not to have permitted it, Miss Nevis," he said, with a poor attempt at a bantering tone. "What would you say if I told you now that I am traveling under an assumed name?"

She laughed.

"Are you a prince or only a duke, please?"

"You're sure I don't look a criminal?"

He regarded her with grave eyes.

Abruptly the smile left her lips.

"Mr. Garth!" she whispered.

"My real name is not Garth, Miss Nevis. 'It is'—he paused—"it is dishonored. No use in mentioning it."

She did not shrink from him, but her hand tightened on the rail.

"I—I am sorry," she said at last.

"Sorry!" he exclaimed. "Did you hear what I said?"

She bowed.

"That my real name was dishonored?"

She bowed again.

"You are not—disgusted?"

"Why should I be? You did not dishonor it," she returned quietly.

His expression of harsh melancholy almost vanished, his voice was eager as a boy's, as he cried:

"You believe that of me? You take me for an honorable man? Ah, but how can you know?"

"I just know," she answered simply.

"God bless your sweet faith!" he whispered. "Miss Nevis," he went on, in a low tone, "will you let me tell you something of myself and why I am now bound for England?"

Perhaps it was his voice rather than his words that rendered her suddenly shy. She glanced back at the lights of the lounge, saying:

"I'm afraid it's getting late, and I ought to go."

"It is my last opportunity," he pleaded. "Won't you listen for a few minutes?"

She hesitated. Five weeks is a long time on board ship, and this man had been her daily companion. She could no longer pretend to herself that he was no more than a passing acquaintance, that his affairs were nothing to her.

Once more she leaned her arms on the rail and watched the water, brilliant with lights from the portholes.

"Thank you," he said softly. "I'll put it in as few words as I can."

He thought for a moment, then began in a cool, steady voice:

"It is twelve years since I left England, in disgrace and much to the relief of my friends. Many a man in my position would have had the police after him, but the man who believed that I had injured him was both merciful and proud. He even offered me money so that I might get away comfortably. But he could not prevent the story's getting abroad.

"He was my uncle—the rich member of our family—and he had brought me up and taken my cousin and myself into his big business. My cousin and I were friendly, but not particularly so. Though we were about the same age, our tastes were very different. My cousin, who was the old man's favorite, had a great regard for money; he was in a hurry to be rich. He went too fast, and got into trouble—such trouble that I dare say he did not know what he was doing when— Well, I'll spare you the details, Miss Nevis. An evening came when my cousin and I were summoned before our uncle. He asked us whether we could explain certain figures—ugly figures. One of us was responsible. My cousin denied all knowledge. I said nothing at all. Why I acted so, I really could not tell you now. Perhaps I thought then that I was behaving rather nobly; now I know it to have been sheer idiocy."

"Oh, no!" cried the girl warmly.

The man who called himself Garth shook his head and continued:

"My uncle gave me an hour to leave his house. Before the time was up, my cousin came to me secretly to implore me to keep silence for one year. He



His voice was eager as a boy's, as he cried: "You believe that of me? You take me for an honorable man? Ah, but how can you know?" "I just know," she answered simply.

was, he assured me, on the eve of making a huge fortune, and so certain was he of success that he insisted on my taking his written promise to pay me one-half of all he possessed at the end of twelve months, and to confess the truth to our uncle. I didn't want the paper then, but I'm glad I have it now." He tapped his breast. "He has had eleven years' grace, anyway."

"So he has never made any reparation?" she inquired after a pause.

"Our uncle died within the year,

deeming me a blackguard. I learned of his death through a newspaper, not from my cousin."

"But at the end of the year?"

"Nothing happened at the end of the year. Nothing has ever happened, so far as my cousin is concerned. I grant that for the last ten years he might have experienced difficulty in finding me—had he wanted to do so; but for two years he was aware of my whereabouts."

"Perhaps he did not make his for-

tune, after all," she ventured, wincing at the bitterness in his voice.

"You are charitable, Miss Nevis; but it happens that he inherited our uncle's business and fortune. At the present moment he is enormously wealthy. Some little time ago, ere I decided to make this voyage, I employed a man in London to discover and send me particulars. My cousin is married, has a son, lives in a splendid West End house, and is noted for his liberality and hospitality. From a cable received at Gibraltar, I learned that he gives a large party to-morrow night—"

"Christmas Eve!"

"Christmas Eve, Miss Nevis. I intend to be present."

At the significant tone of his voice she gave a little shiver.

"Are you feeling cold?" he tenderly inquired.

"No; but I must go soon. Have you never reminded your cousin of his promise, Mr. Garth?"

"Never; and I confess that until lately I had no idea of doing so. Perhaps I hadn't enough time to think about it. But now—"

He halted.

"Now?" she echoed.

"Now he has got to clear my name."

"I—I see. But—perhaps—he thinks you are—dead."

"I've no doubt he hopes that I am," was the grim reply. "Well," he went on, "I won't boast that I would not touch his money, simply because I happen to have made enough through my own exertions. Otherwise I should be inclined to enforce the bond. But I must have back my good name." He looked straight into her eyes. "And I never desired it back so strongly as I do now," he whispered passionately.

Her eyes wavered before his and fell. And suddenly a sob escaped her.

"Miss Nevis!" he cried, distressed.

"Oh, I am sorry for you," she said, "but what will this mean to your cousin's wife and child?"

For a moment anger got the better of him.

"His wife and child! And what if I should desire a wife and—and child?"

Miss Nevis, am I seeking anything more than the barest of justice?"

"Indeed, no. But justice is such an awful, hideous thing when it strikes the innocent along with the guilty. I sometimes think that is the real reason for representing Justice blindfolded and armed with a clumsy sword."

He drew in his breath.

"So you would advise me," he said, in a strained voice, "to remain under my cloud?"

"I have no right to advise you in anything," she replied, with gentle dignity.

He was nettled into saying:

"Can you give me any reason why I should not confront my cousin to-morrow night?"

Softly she answered:

"To-morrow is Christmas Eve."

"On Easter Eve my cousin allowed me to be cast out."

Her eyes filled.

"Poor man!" she murmured. "But you have found happiness since. You have not been miserable all the time."

"No, of course not," he admitted, a trifle sulkily.

"I believe your cousin has."

"I don't. He can't have a conscience."

"Some consciences never seem to make one do the right thing, but they go on hurting all the same. Please don't think that I do not sympathize with you."

Said Garth abruptly: "Why do you defend him—a man you don't even know?"

"I don't defend him. No one could defend him. But I would beg you not to add revenge to your justice. Let Christmas pass before you confront him."

"But that is mere sentiment."

"Even so, the world would be unendurable without it. Oh, Mr. Garth, if you do this thing to-morrow, what of all your Christmas Eves to come, however your name may shine? Will you ever forget the broken man and those who love him?"

"The world is still before him. He retains his wealth. I envy him your sympathy. It is, of course, nothing to

you that I remain a wanderer under a false name."

The girl raised her head.

"That is not quite fair of you," she said warmly. Then, with a slight inclination: "I must go. Good night—and, lest we do not meet in the rush to-morrow morning, good-by."

She held out her hand.

"Miss Nevis," he whispered wildly, hoarsely, "do you *forbid* me to take back my own?"

"Forbid you, Mr. Garth?" A certain haughtiness had crept into her voice. "Of course, I do not forbid you."

She drew her hand from his clasp.

"But," desperately, "is my good name nothing at all to you?"

For a moment she hesitated, looking downward. Her words were audible, and no more; they seemed to come unwillingly:

"I—I'm afraid it is nothing to me."

She was gone, leaving him there, a half-stunned creature. He stared at the gleaming water. What a fool he had been to dream that she might care a little, to imagine that his past or his future mattered to her! Later the old bitterness got the better of him. There were other women in the world—plenty of other women. His first business was to get back his good name. Then — But he knew in his soul that

there was no other woman in the world like Sybil Nevis.

II.

Next morning he kept to his state-room until the ship was alongside the landing stage. He was among the first to disembark. He did not look back, or he might have seen Miss Nevis watching him with sorry, puzzled eyes. Making straight for the special train, he ensconced himself in a "smoker" and opened a newspaper. He was aware that, like himself, she was bound for London, and until last night he had indulged happy

thoughts of the railway journey.

To-day, though sitting in the same train, she was all

the world away from him. He tried not to think of her, not to speculate on her destination in town, to forget that she had promised to give him her address there. He sought to blot out all his plans for and visions of meeting her in London immediately the ugly business was over and he had an unsullied name to offer her. He attempted to read, but his eyes were incapable of



He did not look back, or he might have seen Miss Nevis watching him with sorry, puzzled eyes.

seeing aught but her gentle face and beautiful name against the common paper and printer's ink—*Sybil!*

As he left the train he caught a glimpse of her engaging a porter. Evidently no one had come to meet her. He felt that he ought to offer her his assistance with respect to her luggage, yet he hurried from the platform and tipped an inspector heavily to have his own belongings sent after him to his hotel. The play was over; the lights were out—what use to take a last peep behind the curtain? Let him forget all the foolish glamour and prepare for the stern business awaiting him a few hours hence. He walked from the station like a man under the influence of a drug.

He scarcely noticed the changes in the traffic of the London streets—the whirling taxicabs, the elegant cars, the noisy, vile-smelling busses that would have seemed so strange to him twelve years ago. And he deliberately shut his eyes to the many signs of Christmastide. In the Strand he encountered a man whom he had known well in the days of his youth. The man half halted, started, flushed, and walked on quickly. Garth went white. Verily, he was not forgotten! It was time that he obtained justice!

"Sure this is the house?"

"Yessir. Number twenty-four you gave me."



The man half halted, started, flushed, and walked on quickly.

"Oh—all right."

Garth paid the driver, and, after the cab had gone, stood staring up at the windows of the great house. Nearly all the windows were dark.

"Simmons has given me either the wrong address or the wrong date of the party," he muttered. "However, it's easy to make certain."

He ascended the broad steps and rang the bell. As he did so, a clock in the neighborhood tolled ten.

"If this is his house, and he is out, I'll wait till he comes in, though it should be Christmas morning," said Garth to himself.

The door was opened softly by a manservant.

"Does Mr. Charles Stannard live here?"

"Yes, sir. But——"

"Has he gone out?"

"No, sir." The man hesitated. "Excuse me, sir, but is it important you should see him?"

"Very important."

The man invited Garth to enter, and closed the door very quietly.

"I'll find out whether Mr. Stannard can see you, sir," he said, in a hushed voice; and, treading on tiptoe, he led the way to a room at the back of the spacious hall. The visitor noticed that the house was exceedingly still.

The man showed him into the library and requested his name.

"Garth—Mr. James Garth, of Sydney."

Left to himself, the visitor allowed his gaze to wander about the handsome room. No doubt about it, Charles Stannard was a wealthy man. Yet all his riches would avail him naught against the demand of justice. Already Garth heard him offering half his fortune to save his name, saw him on his knees imploring mercy. All at once he shivered and went nearer to the fire.

A large photograph on the mantel caught his eye—the likeness of a little boy, a singularly beautiful and frank countenance.

"Can that be his son?" he thought sarcastically, and was proceeding to study the young features in detail when the servant returned.

"Do you mind waiting for a little while, sir?" said the man. "It is not possible for me to inform Mr. Stannard until the doctors have gone."

"Certainly, I'll wait. Is—is Mr. Stannard ill?"

"No, sir. It is Master Charlie." The man's voice fell to a whisper. "Very ill, sir. We are afraid—" He checked himself. "I will inform Mr. Stannard as soon as possible, sir," he said, and went out.

For a moment or two Garth gazed at the closed door. Then, as if against his will, he turned again to the photograph. The fine, boyish eyes looked into his.

With a stifled exclamation, he moved from the hearth and halfway across the room. He stopped short at a table

laden with parcels of various shapes and sizes, and bearing also a heap of unopened letters. He could not help seeing what was written on the labels and envelopes.

"Master Charlie Stannard"—the name of the little boy who was very ill—his Christmas presents, his Christmas cards.

Garth clenched his hands and turned away. What was it that Miss Nevis had said about Justice blindfolded and armed with a clumsy sword? Could Justice not strike his enemy so that none other should suffer? If Justice must strike now, would it not be better for this little boy who was very ill that he should never get better—never open those parcels and letters? And the little boy's mother—what of her?

He dropped into a chair. His hands relaxed; he bowed his face in them. What was he going to do? Had Miss Nevis been right, after all? He wanted his good name, and to obtain it he must ignore what he had called sentiment. Sentiment? Nay, common humanity, his love for a woman, his pity for a child, his very reverence for Christ—all these tender things bade him stay his hand. He could not have both a good name and a good conscience. Which would he choose?

The clock on the mantel chimed eleven ere he uncovered his face. It was worn with the spiritual struggle, yet something of the harshness of its melancholy had departed. He got up, gave himself an impatient shake, walked over to the hearth, and took from his pocket a blank envelope. From the envelope he extracted a soiled sheet of paper. For a brief space he regarded it, weighing its value, as it were, then stooped to place it in the fire.

But the flames were not to have it—from his hands, at least. Struck by a new thought, he rose and carried it to the writing table. There he spread it out, and, with a blue pencil taken from the tray, he scrawled "Canceled" across it. Then he placed it in the envelope,



"Charles," he said huskily, "I'm glad your boy is going to get better. And it—it's the time of peace and good will, you know."

addressed it to "Charles Stannard, esquire," and left it on the blotting pad.

There was nothing more for him to do but get away as quickly as possible. With that idea in view, he crossed to the bell. Ere he could press the button, however, the door opened. He pulled himself together, expecting his cousin.

But it was a woman who entered, and at the sight of her his composure gave way.

"Sybil—Miss Nevis!" he cried.

She was very pale, but her voice was fairly steady.

"Yes, Mr. Garth." She closed the door soundlessly, and advanced a few paces into the room, halting with her hand on the back of a chair. "I suppose you did not expect to see me here," she said, with the ghost of a smile.

For an instant his heart flamed hot against her.

"So you knew all the time!" he exclaimed.

"It is but a few minutes ago that I

was told you were waiting to see my brother-in-law. I have known only since then. On the steamer I did not know your real name." She paused and added: "I would have come at once, but the truth was a great shock to me."

"I beg your pardon," he said, abashed by the gentleness of her speech.

"It was natural to suspect me." Her grip on the chair tightened; she lowered her eyes for a moment, then raised them bravely to meet his. "Mr. Garth," she said, "I am no longer in a position to plead for the man who wronged you. You might reasonably say that I was pleading for myself. I cannot expect you to believe that last night I tried to speak for your own sake no less than for common humanity's. But now, in Christ's name, I beg you to delay—to postpone——"

"Don't!" he muttered lower than she could hear.

"To postpone your act of—justice. Of late, Charles has been very unfortunate; he is all but ruined. He and my sister will have to begin life all over again. But, above all, their little son, their only child——"

Garth took a step forward.

"Say no more!" he said shakily. "I—I have given it up."

"You have given it up?"

She failed to grasp his meaning.

"I found that I could do nothing to Charles. I have left the only evidence against him on his table, there. I was going away when you came in. I will go now."

He was just in time to support her and help her to a chair.

"Oh, you good man!" she sighed, hiding her face; "you good man!"

He winced. He looked down at her bowed head, his heart in a turmoil, then with a sigh he turned and moved over to the window. When she had recovered herself, they might, perhaps, part friends, he thought, gazing into the blackness. And there was no sound in the room until a once-familiar voice said brokenly:

"Sybil, my dear, don't give way. I've come to tell you that the crisis is past. Charlie is going to get better. Alice wants you to—— Oh, my God!"

For Garth had slowly wheeled about, and was now facing his cousin. But save by his voice, Garth would never have recognized the haggard, worn-out man who clung to the open door.

The last of Garth's hatred flickered out. Perhaps it was not his own spirit alone that guided him as he went forward with outstretched hand.

"Charles," he said huskily, "I'm glad your boy is going to get better. And it—it's the time of peace and good will, you know."

Letting go the nerveless hand, he glanced at the girl.

"Good-by, Miss Nevis, and thank you," he said softly, and left the room.

With all her gentleness, Sybil was no conventional weakling. She overtook him fumbling at the outer door.

"Where are you going?" she almost demanded, drying her eyes.

"To consider what can be done for my cousin," he answered shamefacedly; "and to Sydney by the first steamer," he added somewhat harshly.

"The first steamer!"

There was that in her voice that made his heart leap.

Yet he replied coldly:

"Would you ask me to stay till the next? Remember that this is London, and that my dishonor is not forgotten. Would you care to be seen with me in London? My good name——"

"It is nothing to me."

"You have said so before."

"Yes. I think you misunderstood me then," she whispered. "I meant that it was nothing compared with——"

She broke down.

There was silence.

"Tell me straight," he said at last, with great effort, "tell me straight, Sybil Nevis—am I anything at all to you?"

It seemed a very long time before she breathed the word:

"Everything!"





ETHEL EMERGES



MARION SHORT

Author of "Divinely Tall," "A Wager Won," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY MARY HUNTER

CLARICE SPRINGER, vivid, enthusiastic, magnetic, was quite the central figure at Mrs. Blodgett's tea—a fact that occasioned that usually beaming hostess much annoyance. Mrs. Blodgett was the maternal aunt of the young suffragist, and according to the latter was "a perfect old darling, but hopelessly hidebound."

"It was only consideration for the feelings of her mother that restrained me from reproving Clarice before every one," Mrs. Blodgett declared to Ethel Burgess, dropping down for a moment beside that reposeful young friend of her niece's. "I cautioned her particularly against mounting her hobby this afternoon, yet she jumped astride of it at the first opportunity, and galloped about just as if she were attending one of those suffrage rallies she knows I abominate. I consider it decidedly unkind of Clarice!"

And the stout lady's rosy countenance became still rosier as she fanned herself with indignant vigor.

Ethel Burgess, blond and slender, with eyes so gray and so compellingly beautiful that the rest of her features hardly mattered, tried to soothe the agitated matron.

"I am sure Clarice did not mean to be unkind. I sat near her, and saw how the whole thing started. That society

reporter came up, and began quizzing her about the last suffrage debate in which she took part; and when Clarice repeated one or two of her arguments, it seemed to start a smaller debate among the bystanders, and—well, they really forced her into 'riding her hobby,' as you call it—she couldn't help herself."

"Well, I hope you'll excuse her conduct all you can to your father when you get home," sighed Mrs. Blodgett, moving her fan a bit more slowly, but still breathing like a plump and flustered pigeon. "He disapproved of Clarice so thoroughly that, right while she was talking, he gathered your mother on his arm and marched out of the house with her. Of course you noticed it."

"Ye-yes," stammered Miss Burgess, uncomfortably acknowledging that she had observed her paternal parent's significant egress. "But I hope you won't mind his having done so. He had been enjoying himself immensely, I'm sure, but he is—er—rather extremely opposed to—to—"

"To the modern woman's unfeminine aggressiveness," chanted Mrs. Blodgett deplorably, as Miss Burgess hesitated. "And so am I! Oh, Miss Burgess, I wish you would remonstrate with my niece! She is beyond me.



The next instant she became aware that some one behind had been watching the little pantomime with as much interest as herself.

She puts me in such a rage when I attempt to talk with her that I get palpitations, and have to give in to her arguments in self-defense, or call for oxygen. But she doesn't convince me in the least that it is woman's sphere to be a man, and she never will! Here she comes, with the air of marching in a procession and carrying a banner. I really can't trust myself to speak to her. And she's so good looking, too—all the Springers are good looking—and isn't it a shame!"

With which rather muddling interrogation she closed her lips tightly and arose. Little bullets of perspiration stood out on her forehead, and her small eyes were distended and glistening. Without a word, she marched past her niece, keeping step to the rhythm of her wrath.

Clarice, with an expression half mischievous, half remorseful, glanced at the retreating figure of her relative over a cerise-veiled shoulder, then lopped limply into an armchair.

"Dear me, Ethel! Auntie's expression just now spoke her opinion of my late effort louder than words." She set her ultrafashionable hat slightly to one side, then laughed ruefully. "I really thought I had myself safely muzzled," she resumed, "for I know auntie prefers me that way, but when I once get started speechifying—well, you know the rest!"

She extended her small feet in front of her, regarding her patent-leather pumps as reproachfully as if they somehow were to blame for what had occurred.

"I can't help being glad that the muzzle was discarded, Clarice," confided Ethel, "for it did me good to watch mother's face while you were talking. All her life, so far as I can remember, she has never presumed to voice an opinion on any subject—political, religious, social—that wasn't just a dutiful echo of what she had heard my dear, dominant father say. She carefully brought me up to be just an echo also. She was plainly amazed that you—a woman—should dare to have independent ideas and proclaim them openly—

just like one of the superior sex—but her amazement was soon lost in admiration of your courage."

"Some day," laughed Clarice, "I hope your parents will catch you holding forth on suffrage and disturbing the atmosphere of an otherwise sedate tea just as I did. Then they will have something to think about!"

Ethel shook her head.

"No chance of that. I'll never be brave enough to do any public proselytizing. My mother's training was too careful and too long. Why, I haven't dared mention at home even yet that I joined a votes-for-women club, and marched in a parade, though believing to the depths of my soul that woman should have every chance for development and service that universal suffrage can give her. I can cheer others who fight for their convictions, but I'm no fighter at all myself."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Clarice. "If you should be put to the test of either displaying your colors or owning yourself a deserter, I believe you'd find yourself as brave as the next one—even if you did insist on a thick veil when you marched in the suffrage parade. Anyhow—I hope so! Well, by-by, dear! I'm off to another tea or two before dinner time." And Clarice glided away to extend her adieux to her aunt.

Mrs. Blodgett still bristled, but less noticeably. A number of callers had taken occasion to express a flattering admiration of her niece's charm and forensic ability, and somehow, in spite of herself, the late offense of that young lady seemed less heinous. She even permitted a carefully expressionless hand to be taken at parting.

Ethel Burgess smiled, as Clarice, looking back at her, made a slight facial contortion expressive of peace restored. The next instant she became aware that some one behind her had been watching the little pantomime with as much interest as herself.

"Well, I'm glad that mother and Cousin Clarice didn't come to blows. It looked to me there for a time as if they might."

Turning, she beheld the tall figure and dark, poetic face of young Floyd Blodgett, whose amused smile did not yet quite conceal a slight frown of annoyance.

"Nobody can be angry with Clarice very long," answered Miss Burgess; "she's such a dear!"

"I'm glad you regard her charitably," said the newcomer, "for I can imagine how repellent her ideas must be to a girl like yourself."

"On the contrary," exclaimed Ethel impulsively, "I find them very sane, very fascinating. I think I admire Clarice more than almost any girl I know."

"Oh, Clara is clever enough," he admitted, with masculine tolerance, "but I wish her superfluous energies might be directed into worthier channels than in pleading for an extension of the rights of woman."

As he spoke, he gestured in an oratorical fashion that strongly recalled the Clarice of half an hour before. Eloquence—Ethel knew—was reputed to be a family inheritance with them both.

"Why should woman insist on acquiring added rights?" he demanded, with deep seriousness. "Can't she realize that in doing so she voluntarily surrenders her most sacred and precious right—the right to be shielded and protected by man from hard contact with the world? Why should she wish to fling herself in the face of that world?"

Ethel's reply was murmurous and timid, and her color came and went. It was not easy to express her convictions to one of the opposite sex who stood in opposition, for her training had all been against it.

"But thousands and thousands of women are forced into industrial life, and can't be protected except by enacted public laws. They have no one to shield them. Surely they must be taken into account. Through suffrage they should have a voice in the making of the laws that so intimately concern their welfare, should they not?"

But young Blodgett seemed scarcely to have followed her. There rested on

his countenance a look of profound anxiety.

"Miss Burgess," he said, lowering his voice and leaving his chair to take a seat beside her, "may I speak to you seriously and—and a trifle—personally?"

Something in his tone, his manner, sent a little thrill through her heart. Did he care so much, then, to have her mind in harmony with his own? Quiet and undemonstrative though she was, the currents of her nature ran very deep, and for a long time they had been set full tide toward the haven of this man's love, although he knew it not.

"Of course, Mr. Blodgett, say what you like," she consented; and for a moment her lashes hid the telltale radiance of her wonderful eyes.

"Then don't let Clarice and her extremist doctrines rob you of your exquisite femininity," he begged, his voice frankly tender. "You are the kind of woman—the quiet, contained, restful other soul of restless, driven man—that the world can't do without. Something more than reason—a deep, underlying instinct—makes most men opposed to all this agitation, this striving of women to become something different from what our mothers and grandmothers have been for ages—the deep heart of the home."

An earnest rejoinder arose in Ethel's mind:

"Surely woman's mental growth, through coming in contact with larger issues, should only make her still more worthy to be revered as the deep heart of the home."

But the impulse to speak was stayed by something stronger and more compelling. The light but thrilling touch of Floyd Blodgett's fingers upon her own seemed to dwarf everything into unimportance but the preservation of one delicately intimate moment. The opportunity Clarice had mentioned of showing her colors or owning herself a deserter was upon her, and she was aware that she was remaining deliberately dumb.

"I can't believe it possible," continued Blodgett, encouraged by her silence,



"I told Clarice I'd never forgive her if my dearest enemy were not among those present," she informed him.

"that Clarice could create more than a surface ruffle in the calm depths of a nature like yours, but since it's you, Miss Burgess—Ethel—I object even to the ruffle."

She smiled up at him conciliatingly. "I don't think you need have any fear that I shall become other—than I am," she said, with sweet evasiveness; then, catching a glimpse of her face in a mir-

ror opposite, she was startled to discover that her expression was the identical one she had grown so used to seeing on her mother's countenance—the gently deceptive smile that for years had concealed a whole schoolhouse of little thought-children condemned to remain behind barred doors and windows forever.

Clarice Springer gave a house party in her beautiful home up the Hudson during the Christmas holidays, and Floyd Blodgett and Ethel Burgess—now his fiancée—were among the invited guests.

"I suppose Clara will have a superabundance of suffragettes on hand," laughed Blodgett, after dispatching their acceptances to the invitation, "but I can find refuge with you, dearest, whenever the babel becomes too much for me. Besides—I'm really fond of Cousin Clarice, for all her mistaken activities."

Ethel, as usual when the subject came up, was strongly tempted to speak out in defense of Clarice and her activities, but the impulse died even as it was born. The gently deceptive smile was now become almost a habit.

"I'm afraid even the consolation of my presence won't be sufficient for you if Agnes Jackson is among the guests," she laughed. "Clarice and she are almost inseparable, and she's certain to be there."

"Clarice and she—two of a kind—I know!" He grimaced in unfeigned consternation. "And Agnes my pet abomination! I suppose there'll be some skirmishing between us—there always is more or less when we meet—but a passage at arms with her will only make the joy of getting back to peace and you still greater—thou quiet soul of me!"

And as Ethel, blissfully silent, went into his arms, it seemed to her that with such reward one could forever forswear both ideas and ideals and still be happy.

Agnes Jackson was the first guest they encountered on their arrival at the Springer domicile, and she rushed to-

ward Blodgett with a triumphant shriek and an outstretched hand.

"I told Clarice I'd never forgive her if my dearest enemy were not among those present," she informed him; "but now I shall continue to call her friend for a time, for here you are!"

"But of what avail is the arrival of one's enemy when one's ammunition is all exhausted?" he inquired, pleasantly sarcastic. "I don't believe you've a single arrow of argument left in your quiver, Miss Jackson—they've all spent themselves in the past against my invincible shield of masculine logic." And he struck an attitude of warriorlike defense.

"I have unsuspected arrows in reserve," she retorted, "although I don't believe that I shall need them. Mine enemy bleeds even if he will not acknowledge it! Oh, by the way," and a mischievous twinkle added to the brightness of her jet-black eyes, "I asked the butler to put one of our new and beautiful votes-for-women pennants in your room to continue the subconscious influence I know my arguments must have been exerting."

Then and there a lively set-to between them began. It was resumed spasmodically during dinner. Later, while the majority adjourned to the drawing-room for music, their voices in tireless discussion of a never-changing theme could still be heard from the library.

During the week the dashing and aggressive young friend and coworker of Clarice fairly monopolized the young man's time and attention, and while he invariably insisted after one of his argumentative sessions with her that the peace of Ethel's companionship was heaven by contrast, it became quite evident to that young woman that he was really, if unconsciously, restless for a renewal of the verbal strife between the ardent young suffragist and himself.

A climax was reached on the morning when Ethel—coming gayly downstairs in anticipation of a long motor ride with Floyd—was informed that while the car was ready and waiting, neither her fiancé nor Miss Agnes Jack-

son was to be located anywhere about the premises.

"I forgot all about the ride we had planned. I own it," the young man explained in hasty and remorseful apology, on his return, finding a disconsolate sweetheart in the conservatory. "But do let me explain, dearest, if I can."

"You needn't; it doesn't matter."

Ethel's pride helped her to speak indifferently, but did not render invisible her reddened eyelids.

"Yes, but it does matter," Blodgett insisted, with increasing earnestness and quite the proper loverliness. "For I've been a brute, and made you cry! But it all happened like this: Fred Burt and I were having a little afterbreak-fast game of billiards, and along came Agnes Jackson, so we invited her to take a cue. You know she plays almost as well as a man. During the game she began to champion the cause of the militant suffragists in England, and of course I couldn't stand for that.

"Before I knew it, we had debated ourselves out of the billiard-room door, and were having a walking and talking match down the road, and—consequently—we both got back too late for lunch, and I missed my ride with you. But we'll have it to-morrow morning instead, and—oh, sweetheart, it's so good to get back to you! It's like a blessed calm after a storm! Say you forgive me—please!"

Ethel said so, very graciously, and lavished on him once more the gently deceptive smile. But the fact that she, who had become Blodgett's careful echo, had been entirely forgotten for Agnes Jackson, who opposed him openly, still rankled within her breast.

"You're so sweet and silent and refreshing," he murmured appreciatively, as, with his arm about her, they passed into a sun parlor opening off the far end of the conservatory. "I think if you'll just sit down here and fuss with that embroidery of yours a bit, I'll dash off a poem about you—something I've wanted to do for a long while—'She Whose Charm is Her Silence.' How's that for a taking title, eh?"

He got out a little notebook, and straightway began to scribble in the boyish, impetuous way that Ethel loved, while she—because he had said that he always liked to see it in her hands—dallied becomingly with her fancywork.

The poem seemed to be developing into a very lengthy one indeed. Page after page was covered, revised, read, and approved of, and still—almost feverishly absorbed in his task—Blodgett wrote on and on. Peace flowed back to Ethel as she watched him. What if, concerning certain subjects, he, in his youth, was apparently as nonprogressive and inflexible as her father in his age? Still he was handsome, ardent, manly, clever, and—she loved him! Her eyes glowed like stars as they rested on the bowed head of her poet lover, and, looking up suddenly, he involuntarily exclaimed at their beauty. Then, as her lashes veiled them again, he closed his notebook with a satisfied snap, and thrust it into his pocket.

"Oh," protested Ethel archly, "but am I not to hear what you have written?"

"No, indeed!" he declared, with proud masterfulness. "You are not to hear one word, for—thank Heaven!—you don't need it."

"Don't—need—it?"

She repeated the words, perplexed.

"No, but Miss Agnes Jackson does. In the few minutes that I've been sitting here, I've written out refutations of every point she imagined she drove home this morning. Talk about inspiration! Well, this ought to be inspired if it isn't. It almost wrote itself!" He produced the book again, and shuffled through its pages, nodding and smiling as he did so. "If you'll excuse me for a few moments, dear, I think I'll try to find that young Amazon while these notes are still white hot. That's the time to deliver them with the most telling effect, you know. You don't mind, do you?"

"Certainly not, Floyd."

Again the gently deceptive smile, though this time it vanished almost as quickly as it came. Blodgett strode



Never once did her eyes travel toward a certain young man standing back in the shadowed hallway of the factory.

from the room, whistling, and with quite the air of a conquering hero.

Left alone, Ethel flung her fancy-work on the little wicker table in front of her, and her graceful head sank miserably in its depths. The earlier humiliation of the morning seemed as nothing to this. While she had sat there in a sort of fool's paradise, wondering what sweet, romantic things he might be conjuring up to write about her, his mind had journeyed back to Agnes—Agnes, the last woman on earth she had suspected might become her rival! And in thinking of her he

had totally forgotten that he had ever meant to write: "She Whose Charm is Her Silence."

"Good heavens, Ethel! What's the matter?" Miss Clarice Springer, freshly gowned for the afternoon, paused in the doorway, a fashion magazine under her arm. "Now, don't force that shaky little smile, and say it's nothing, for you can't deceive me. Come on—out with it!"

Ethel blindly fumbled with her embroidery, but made no reply.

"Where's Cousin Floyd?" demanded Clarice suspiciously.

"He was here until just a few minutes ago," said Ethel. "We haven't quarreled—or anything. I'm just a little upset over something, that's all."

"Over Floyd's neglect of you—that is what has brought the tears. Isn't it?"

"Neglect? Is it so plain to you—to every one, then?"

"Every one who has eyes to see. He's with Agnes Jackson about nine-tenths of the time, so far as I can figure it out. There, now," and she came and laid a firm, but sympathetic, hand on Ethel's shoulder. "I suppose I've hurt your feelings by my plain speaking, but I always did tell you just what I thought about things, even when we were spindle-legged tots in school together, and if I hurt, it's only because I want to help. What I want to know is—what are you going to do to break up this charming companionship that has developed between Floyd and Agnes?"

"Do? Nothing, of course. To assert myself has never been my way, Clarice."

"And that explains exactly why things are as they are. Your tactics with Floyd are all wrong, I can tell you that."

"But I haven't any tactics, Clarice. If I must employ tactics to hold the man I love—I'm not equal to it."

"Ethel, Ethel! What a hypocrite you have become!"

"Hypocrite? Clarice!"

"Yes, hypocrite! Pardon the plain speaking of an old friend, but you even try to deceive yourself. What else was it but tactics when you sent in your resignation to our suffrage club—tactics employed for fear Floyd Blodgett might find out your former interest in the feminist movement if you remained a member?"

"Perhaps I am—and have been—more or less of a hypocrite ever since I became engaged to Floyd," admitted Ethel humbly, after a pause, "but what I told myself, made myself believe, was that I was simply trying in every way to be what he thinks the ideal woman should be. I own that to do that has

come to seem the most important thing in life to me."

"But do you think you are becoming an ideal woman—his ideal or even one in the abstract—when you put aside your real self and assume a personality that isn't yours at all? My dear Ethel, as a reward for your pains you have simply succeeded in becoming outwardly as dumb and characterless as a bland white pincushion, and the worst of it is— Well, I guess I'd better spare you the truth!"

She stared meditatively out of the window at the wintry hills beyond.

"But I don't wish to be spared the truth," said Ethel, roused to unwonted interest. "The worst of it is—what?"

"That the more you succeed in carrying out Floyd's pet theories, the more you bore him."

Ethel, startled, gave a wrench that snapped the threads of her embroidery.

"Clarice, that is cruel, cruel! Oh, how can you say such a thing?"

"You wanted the truth—now you have it. You do bore Floyd Blodgett—even if he's too loyal to admit it. There, I'm glad I've roused you a bit! I'd like to rouse you to the extent that you'd feel it incumbent upon you to box my ears. Then I'd know your case wasn't as hopeless as it seems, and that you might decide to turn over a new leaf and be yourself instead of somebody else."

"Do you mean to say, Clarice, that Floyd hasn't been sincere—that the pattern he has held up to me for imitation isn't one he really admires? Why, it doesn't seem possible!"

"Oh," conceded Clarice, "Cousin Floyd thinks he's sincere, I haven't a doubt. But the fact is that he is one kind of an individual while imagining himself quite another. I've made a study of the gentleman in my odd moments. In reality, he enjoys the society of the progressive woman who keeps him mentally alert, even if every day of his life he insists to the contrary. It is the static type of female that wearies him. Witness how he trails about after a dynamic creature like Agnes Jackson!"

"But," said Ethel, bewildered. "I thought he liked Agnes for her beauty, her coquetry, and in spite of her ideas, not because of them."

"Yet it is because of them, and them alone. Otherwise, she couldn't rival you for a second. She holds his interest by constantly tempting him to examine some new and piquant angle of her many-sided mind."

"Clarice, from this hour I shall try to be different."

"You mean by that you'll try to be real?"

"Yes."

"Good! I'm really tremendously fond of you, Ethel, and should hate to lose you as a cousin-in-law. 'Lest you forget,' let me remind you that Agnes is not the forgetting kind. Show your colors, my dear—you've kept them hidden too long."

As Ethel Burgess went toward the sewing-room door, she heard the well-oiled clicking of an excellent sewing machine and the high-voiced chatter of the two dressmakers engaged upon her trousseau. She paused outside for a moment, as if rather dreading the task before her, then turned the knob and walked in.

"Ah, Miss Burgess! That is like you—always so prompt! You're just in time for your fitting."

The elder of the two Misses Rafferty held up the dainty dancing frock that she had been putting together.

"Thank you," said Miss Burgess, very quietly. "I did not come in for a fitting, but to tell you that there has been a change of plans. The work you have begun is to be discontinued. After to-day I shall not need you for some time."

The sisters arose in unconcealed amazement and marked dismay.

"But, Miss Burgess," cried the younger, "aren't you satisfied with our work?"

"Entirely," said Ethel. "But there has been a change of plans—"

"But this is the middle of May," interrupted the elder protestingly; "and if we finish this large trousseau before

the first of June it will take every minute between now and then, and extra help at that!"

She looked at the heaps of laces, silks, and chiffons that billowed about the room, as if appealing to them to bear out her words.

When Miss Burgess, though without making further explanations, offered to recompense them for the full time for which they had been engaged, the faces of the sisters cleared, though bewilderment still sat upon their brows.

"We hope," began one of them, curious beyond control, "that there is no trouble between Miss Burgess—"

"My phone is ringing, I believe," said Ethel, ignoring the remark, "so I will bid you good morning."

She heard a veritable outbreak of conjecture as she closed the door behind her, and hastily sped away from the sound of it.

"Guess who it is," came a familiar voice over the wire as she reached her own room.

"Why, Clarice! Is that you?"

"It certainly is. Just got back from Florida last night. If you're not too busy with those wedding preparations, I'd like to call and take you for a short ride in my car."

"Thank you. I'm not busy, and I shall be very glad to go."

"Anything the matter? You don't sound happy."

Silence.

"What have you and Floyd quarreled about?"

"We haven't quarreled."

"Something's gone wrong, though! I catch discordant vibrations over the phone. I'll be after you in about twenty minutes if a tire doesn't burst. Is that too soon?"

"No. You'll find me ready and waiting."

They had been out a full hour, and were returning leisurely along Riverside Drive when Clarice turned and cast a keenly inquiring look at her companion.

"You haven't mentioned Floyd's name once since we started, and it used



"That means, I suppose, that you wish to give your life to a cause instead of to me."

to come drifting along about every other sentence. What has he done?"

"Nothing."

"Nonsense! I know that he and none other is responsible for that sad, pale face of yours. You don't look like yourself at all. So I ask again—what has he done?"

Ethel gave a wan little smile, and shrugged her shoulders.

"He has simply grown tired of his

bargain, that's all. You know you warned me once that I bored him, and—well, the case has become critical."

"What makes you think so?"

"I put it to the test."

"How?"

"Our wedding day was set for June, you know, and we were to sail on the *Mauretania*."

"Yes, I know all that. Go on."

"Well, the other evening I tentatively

suggested that we postpone our marriage until winter."

"And what happened?"

"He agreed eagerly, Clarice, accepting my lame excuses without protest or question. It proved to me what I've been fighting against believing ever since those holidays spent with you—that he has ceased to care for me. Oh, he's been too chivalrous to break it to me himself, but it's the truth!"

"You've declared it all off, then?"

"I have ordered work stopped on my wedding things, and I shall send back his ring to-night," and she sighed heavily.

Clarice was plainly impatient.

"So you, though knowing yourself to be possessed of ten times Agnes Jackson's charm and originality, have deliberately permitted the wreck of your happiness?"

"Clarice, I honestly tried to follow your advice, whether right or wrong, but he refused to take my efforts seriously; asked me why I wished to repeat things I didn't in the least believe; said he didn't care to have me do so even if only in fun. Then he vowed so earnestly that it was the eternal difference between me and women like Agnes Jackson that made him love me—that somehow I went back to believing it, and retreated into silence again."

"I wish I hadn't made that Florida trip just at this time," mused Clarice regretfully. "This campaign hasn't been managed right. I still feel that you and Floyd were born for each other, and that Agnes is nothing more than an exclamation point in the story."

"But he spends more time with her than ever, Clarice, and perhaps it would have turned out the same way in any case, even if I had been fortunate enough to make a different—an honest beginning with him that day at your Aunt Blodgett's tea. Anyhow, it has lightened the gloom a bit to confide in you. You may take me back home now if you don't mind."

"Where you'd sit down and promptly begin to moon over Floyd Blodgett again!" objected her companion. "No, indeed! I shall do nothing of the kind.

'Love is of man's life a thing apart—'tis woman's whole existence,' is a statement not generally accepted by the woman of to-day. She has discovered that she can find escape from private misery just as a man does, by engaging in a definite work—employing herself in some kind of world service. Coming right down to business, I think you'd better accompany me over to the East Side, where I have some suffrage matters to attend to. Is it a go?"

"Yes," said Ethel. "I'm tired of being miserable, and if there's any escape from it, I'll take it gladly."

It was during the noon hour, Miss Springer, running her car along in front of a line of factory buildings, came to a stop before a big gate opening onto a square-paved court. A watchman bowed genially in recognition, and Clarice, in response to his signal, swung inside and halted near the door of one of the factories.

Employees, male and female, gradually straggled into the court from the street, some till munching at fragments of their luncheon. Several young girls ran forward and greeted Miss Springer cordially. Others, grouped about the factory steps, chatted among themselves, indifferent to the owner of the car and the mission on which she had come.

Clarice stooped and produced a banner of yellow and white from somewhere beneath her feet.

"Will you be my standard bearer while I make a little speech, Ethel?"

"I will," declared Miss Burgess, without hesitation, "and shan't hide behind a veil while I'm doing it, either. For the moment I'm strangely rid of my chronic cowardice, and could almost orate myself if I had to."

"Suffrage for the Working Girl!" was the inscription displayed on the banner when Ethel unfurled it, and upon that subject Clarice began to discourse earnestly, though informally, to those gathered near to listen. But in the midst of her remarks, she checked herself suddenly and, turning to Ethel, lifted the banner from her hands.

"Finish my speech for me—there's a

dear!" she commanded, as calmly as if she were not asking an unprecedented performance of her timid friend. "You've heard my stock arguments often enough to know them as well as I do. I'll display the colors, but I want you to fill in the rest of the time yourself."

"But, Clarice," objected Ethel, astounded, "you know that never in my life have I——"

"Then it's time you began," interrupted Miss Springer peremptorily. "Come, you've found that cowardice doesn't pay, haven't you? I want you to do what I ask, and to do it as well as if your whole future happiness depended on it. Do it to please me—if for no other reason."

Obediently Ethel arose and tremblingly transferred the banner to the keeping of Clarice, though she could not in the least imagine what motive had prompted that young woman's strange request.

To her own great surprise, as she began to speak, Ethel found that there, in those unfamiliar surroundings, and among the children of toil, she was as self-possessed as if in the midst of friends in her own drawing-room. As she warmed to her subject, she realized, too, that she was advancing not only the "stock arguments" mentioned by Clarice, but conclusions that had lain deep in her own consciousness as well, and that she had often secretly yearned to disclose to her unsympathetic betrothed.

The sweetness of her personality, her fresh eloquence, and a certain natural magnetism, caught the crowd, as Clarice, with all her hard brilliance, had not been able to do, and that delighted young suffragist sat back and listened with an attention that was almost breathless. Never once did her eyes travel toward a certain young man who, standing back in the shadowed hallway of the factory, was regarding the speaker in the court below with amazed and spellbound intensity. But from the moment of her yielding place to Ethel, she had known of his presence there. It was that knowledge that had determined her to make a final experiment

in the interests of her discouraged friend.

When the one-o'clock whistle blew, the crowd of employees turned and filed back into the building, with much friendly waving of hands toward the occupants of the car, and shouting of invitations to come again. Then, when the coast was clear, young Blodgett slowly descended the steps and crossed to them.

"Floyd!" Ethel exclaimed, aghast.

She knew from the look on his face that he must have been among her auditors, though unseen by herself until this moment.

"Why, how do you happen to be in this neighborhood?" Clarice inquired of her cousin nonchalantly, feigning surprise at his appearance.

"A business errand," he replied, rather shortly, his eyes seeking Ethel's averted ones. "Dad's wholesale place is near here, you know."

"Oh, yes," replied Clarice airily, "I know; but I had forgotten."

What would be the effect of her experiment, she wondered. She looked from man to girl and back again, realizing that a climax for weal or woe was at hand.

"Climb into the tonneau and entertain Ethel while I'm gone, won't you, Floyd?" she asked smilingly. "I want to run across to the drug store for a drink of bromo seltzer."

Left alone with his fiancée, Blodgett addressed her with frigid formality.

"I had no idea you were in the habit of making public speeches," he said. "Please permit me to congratulate you upon your success."

"Thank you," said Ethel, frozen into answering coldness by his manner. "I'm glad if you liked it."

After a pause he spoke again, and this time his air was that of a stoical, but deeply injured, man.

"So this is why you wished to postpone our marriage!" he observed. "I had supposed that it was for merely trivial reasons, but instead—it is because you have been drifting away from me." He laughed bitterly. "And I had imagined that we were in accord

in everything! I have been deluding myself, it seems."

"Yes," said Ethel, determined to meet the new situation with all the courage and candor at her command; "you have been deluding yourself."

"I can hardly realize yet"—and his voice grew more bitter still—"that it was actually you—you, the Ethel that I thought I knew so well—standing up here advocating the things that you have so often heard me oppose."

"Yet it was I," said Ethel, crushing a recurrent impulse to conciliate him. "and I meant every word that I said."

"You cling to that banner," he remarked resentfully, "as if it were your most precious possession."

"I believe in what it stands for," declared she, sternly resolved upon the truth; "but I cling to it because I'm nervous."

She pulled off her engagement ring and put it into his hand.

"All has been over between us for some time," she said, keeping her voice determinedly expressionless. "I couldn't go on a whole lifetime pretending to be your ideal, knowing in my heart that I wasn't, so it may as well be definitely ended now."

He allowed the ring to remain where she had placed it.

"That means, I suppose, that you wish to give your life to a cause instead of to me."

"He's actually cheerful about it—he doesn't care—he doesn't care!" Ethel confided to herself with deepening despair, then answered in a voice that soared as blithely as his own:

"And suppose I answer that I do?"

"Then I say you shan't, that's all!"

His words rang out with such stormy passion that they roused the watchman from a nap on his bench by the gate and caused him to blink in drowsy reproach. "If you think I'm too conservative and narrow-minded to appreciate a brainy woman like you—you're mistaken, that's all! Why, I was never so proud of you in my life as when I saw you holding that crowd in the hollow of your little hand, and doing it without losing one iota of that sweet womanliness that first drew me to you! But I need you more than any cause does, Ethel, and you've simply got to come back to me. Do you hear me? You've got to come back!"

"Very well," answered Ethel meekly, and almost inaudibly, "since you feel that way about it—I'll come."

And in her heart she heard the music of the morning stars.



Love Song for Christmas

LIKE strange red metal, plating thick
The winter sky, the afterglow
Spreads round the west, while on its quick,
Fierce glory, stand the trees a-row,
And brambles darkly etched below.

And dark within some forked limb,
Where twittering mothers, to and fro
Near their shrill nestlings, once would skim,
Deserted bird nests blot the glow;
And higher swings the mistletoe.

The Yule comes round; plucked out with care
That darling berried spray shall know
House warmth and joy. I may not dare,
Sweeting, to clasp you, but shall show
My heart's love, 'neath the mistletoe!

RHEEM DOUGLAS

EPHRAIMSON BROTHERS

Diamonds and Jewelry

By Virginia Middleton

Author of "Cotrelly's First Capture,"
"The Harriet Mead Case," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY
R. VAN BUREN



THE old-fashioned row of houses in Greenwich Village in which Mark Cotrelly, inspector of the customs department, had his lodgings, boasted of two or three features no longer common, even in that favored section of New York, where the home-like charm of an older day is not wholly obliterated. Among these features is the series of balconies that stretch across each floor. The houses stand well back from the street, with grass plots and little, iron-railed fences closing them in primly. The balcony of each floor is reached by French windows that open upon it. Strangers to the neighborhood always exclaim over the charm of these dwellings, which, in any city of homes, would be not at all unusual.

The balconies would be continuous from the first house of the row to the last, but for wooden partitions that securely separate the inhabitants of No. 2, taking the air upon their verandas, from those of No. 4, and so on along the line; separate them, that is, so far as sight is concerned. Sound, scorning wooden barriers, has been known to leap from one porch to the next. And it was through sound that

Mark Cotrelly, lodging on the top floor of No. 2, at the corner, came to know young Mr. Vermilion, lodging on the top floor of No. 4. Almost all the houses in the pretty little row are given over to lodgings in these degenerate days, where, in New York, only plutocrats and boarding-house mistresses occupy "whole houses."

Mark had made his balcony a comfortable lounging place for summer evenings by a neat adjustment of awnings and screens, a couch, a table, and an easy-chair or two. And one summer night, as he lounged and smoked and meditated on the problems of a calling that he had come to love, he heard violent language from the other side of the wooden partition.

"There's not a match in the whole darned place," complained a masculine voice bitterly. "Haven't you one your-

self, Horry? Where's that silver match safe your sister gave you Christmas?"

"Match safe's empty," replied a voice, presumably Horry's.

"She's beastly stingy about matches, confound her!" went on the first speaker grumblingly, and evidently not referring to Horry's sister. "Well, I'll chase myself down into the basement and demand a box."

"Don't bother for me," said Horry affably. "I can get on without smoking if you can."

It was then that Mark, comfortably ensconced on the other side of the partition, played the part of a man and a brother.

"Hold on there, next door," he called. "I'll throw you a box of matches over the partition."

He suited the action to the word, and the sound of a box striking on the wooden floor rewarded his ears; also the voluble thanks of two young men who were thus enabled to enjoy their favorite recreation without the necessity of descending to the basement and seeking out a landlady parsimonious of matches.

In this neighborly fashion began Mark's slight acquaintance with young Mr. Vermilion and his chum, Mr. Horace Bleek. It remained chiefly an acquaintance of nighttime conversation during the summer, of friendly greetings from one balcony to the other, and occasional commodities interchanged—not infrequently the box of matches, once in a while a box of cigarettes or a tin of tobacco, and sometimes even a bottle of beer gingerly raised over the partition and lowered by a string.

Once or twice the young men exchanged calls, looking one another over with frank curiosity to see how far the testimony of a friendly voice was borne out by the face. By the time winter had come and the balconies were out of commission, a cheerful, casual little friendship had been established. That it was ever to bear fruit more important than matches and smokes and the genial sense of a light companionship Mark never dreamed.

But one night in the following winter, young Mr. Vermilion mounted to the top story of No. 2, and, with a beaming countenance, demanded Mark's congratulations. "She" was, it is almost needless to state, the dearest, the prettiest, the sweetest little girl in the world—that is what the fiancée of a young Mr. Vermilion always is. Of course, he would be giving up his rooms at No. 4 very shortly—they wanted to live in the suburbs, have a garden, keep a hen, own their own home. Did Mark know of any agreeable, honest young man who would like to take over young Mr. Vermilion's share in the top story of No. 4, and "batch" with Horry?

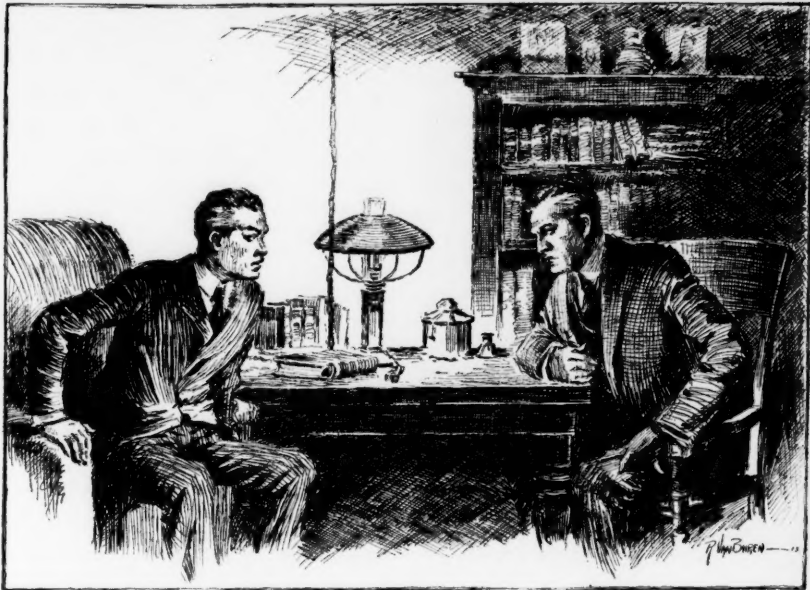
Mark said that he would lay the tempting opportunity before such of his acquaintances as might seem homeless, and he wrung young Mr. Vermilion's hand and looked at him with the combined pity and awe with which a bachelor always looks at the man who has just pledged himself into lifelong slavery.

"Want to see the ring?" asked the young lover, looking at Mark with the mixture of pity and contempt with which the newly engaged look at those not so fortunate, not so wise, as themselves.

Mark replied that he would like to see the ring.

"I'm sort of up a tree about it," said the young man frankly, as he produced from a jeweler's box a gold ring set with a very pretty, moderate-sized diamond. "You see, I feel as if it were up to me to get the ring from Tiffany's, but one of the boys in my office put me wise to a place where you can get diamonds at least a third cheaper. So I went down to Allen Street, and bought the ring of Ephraimson Brothers. I tell you, when you're going to set up housekeeping, every dollar counts. But of course I know, too, that a man gets engaged only once in his life—at least that's as often as I'm going to get engaged—and that he ought to do the handsome thing by the girl.

"I couldn't make up my mind for a day which to do, but I finally did what I think was sensible, and bought the



"The rise in the tariff!" Mark exclaimed. "But the tariff on diamonds has been reduced."

sparkler from old Ephraimson. And now I declare I'm ashamed to show it to Effie—her name's Euphemia—in anything but a Tiffany box. She's such a little queen—it doesn't seem right to give her anything cheap. I don't suppose you've got a Tiffany box handy?"

Mark regretted that he did not happen to include the desired, stylish receptacle for a ring among his possessions, and young Mr. Vermilion sighed and wrinkled his brows over his problem. Then he cheered up, recalling that Horace had a friend who had a cousin who knew a man in Tiffany's. Perhaps he would be able to "work something" through this fortunate chain.

"I wonder how your friend Ephraimson is able to sell diamonds so much cheaper than the other jewelers?" observed Mark thoughtfully, as he returned the ring to the blue satin puff that formed the interior of the somewhat too gaudy Ephraimson ring case.

"Oh, he said something about hav-

ing imported a lot of stones before the rise in the tariff," said the ingenuous young Mr. Vermilion.

"The rise in the tariff!" Mark exclaimed. "But the tariff on diamonds has been reduced."

"Reduced? That's funny. I'm sure he said something about having laid in a supply before the duty went up, and about being too honest to take advantage of his customers. Anyway," added Mr. Vermilion, with the air of a thoughtful student of industry, "of course, he can afford to sell at a smaller profit than the swell places—he doesn't have their expenses. He doesn't have to pay Tiffany's rent or Tiffany's salaries." Then a sudden fear blanched his face, and he snatched his ring from its blue nest again. "You don't think there's any doubt that it's the genuine thing, do you?"

"Not the least in the world," Mark reassured him quickly. "It's a beautiful little stone—and not so very little,

either. It seems to me remarkably pure and brilliant."

"He said it was of the first water," declared young Vermilion, looking at it half proudly, half dubiously. "Of course, I'm no judge of diamonds——"

"But I am. I've had occasion to see a great many of them," Mark said warmly and encouragingly. "And yours is all right. Don't have a moment's anxiety about that."

Whereupon the young lover cheered up and devoted all the forces of his intellect to the problem of obtaining a more worthy receptacle for his ring than that provided by "Ephraimson Brothers, Diamonds and Jewelry, Allen Street."

Now, the heart of Mark Cotrelly was greatly in his work. The puzzles it presented were as alluring to him as any that had ever absorbed him in the boy's story papers when he was a young lad, or had tempted him to spend hours over the chessboard in more recent days. He was, perhaps, a little given to seeing problems where there were none, to suspecting a clever trickery where only innocuous honesty existed, and to scenting a probable smuggler in every citizen returning to his native shores. And the thought of Ephraimson Brothers and their low-priced diamonds interested him, even obsessed him. He decided to gratify his curiosity in regard to the dealer by paying a personal visit to Allen Street.

It was a midwinter day when he made his way eastward into the very heart of the great, congested district of New York. But in spite of the discolored slush into which a recent snowfall had already been turned, the outdoor life of the district seemed as busy as in midsummer. The sidewalks were lined with trucks from which almost every sort of ware was to be bought—collar buttons, fish, furs, rolls, candies, stockings, hats, oilcloth, flannel, knives and forks, cooking utensils, false hair, fruit, lace, veils, and onions.

Long-bearded men, with misshapen, dingy derbies tipped back upon their foreheads, sold the wares to keen-eyed, black-wigged, shawled, and aproned

women. Behind them, on the sidewalk, passed the second generation of their race—girls wearing wonderful willow plumes, lounging youths smoking many cigarettes. Every window, it seemed to Mark, in the houses behind the rows of curbstone trucks was a shop window. Never, he thought, had there been such people for buying and selling.

There were cases full of gleaming brass and copper outside narrow tenement hallways; there were show windows full of brass bedsteads, of satin dresses, of plumed and flowered hats; there were innumerable costumers in whose windows so many immaculate, waxen young men held so many beautiful, tulle-veiled, waxen young ladies by the hand—leading them presumably from the marriage altar—that Mark wondered if matrimony was the most important industry of the region.

And thinking of matrimony, his mind, which had lost itself for the time being in the wonderful show of Allen Street, came back to its quest. He wanted Ephraimson Brothers, of the engagement rings. He found them easily enough, at the corner of an intersecting street.

There was no doubt that the salary list of Ephraimson Brothers would show, as young Mr. Vermilion had hinted, marked differences from that of the Fifth Avenue jewelers. When Mark entered, there were only two people behind the counter, which was a single one, running the length of the narrow room—a dark, sleek youth of some eighteen or twenty years, and a short, stout, black-mustached man of forty-five or fifty. It was the latter who bustled forward to greet Mark.

"Vat can I do for you, young shentlemans?" he asked.

Mark answered hesitatingly that he wished to see some diamond rings.

"Solidaire?" asked the man, twinkling upon Mark with a sympathetic, congratulatory air.

Mark admitted that it was solitaires in particular that he wished to see.

Then he went on: "You are Mr. Ephraimson himself?"

"Mr. M. Ephraimson," replied the

little storekeeper. "There are two of us. My brother, Samuel, he is away just now. He is in Europe, getting us some more solidaire diamont rings for the young shentlemens that vish to get themselves married."

He chuckled oilily as he spoke. Mark's hesitation and embarrassment in his volunteer rôle of detective had been interpreted by the astute Mr. M. Ephraimson as the marks of the state familiar to a dealer in engagement and wedding rings.

Mark laughed, rather hollowly, in reply to Mr. Ephraimson's insinuation, which had all the pointedness of a punch in the ribs.

The little jeweler produced a tray, and laid it before Mark upon the counter. Meantime, the sleek youth had stationed himself between the customer and the door, to forestall any attempt at an illegitimate, sudden sortie; there had been too many daring jewelry holdups in small establishments that season to permit an East Side jeweler to feel perfect security concerning any customer obviously not of the district.

An Italian woman came in who wanted a silver christening mug, and a Jewess to inquire the price of a plated ice-water pitcher in the window; but the youth did not give up his station to induce the women to wait until his employer should be free of the present customer.

"You won't find no better values in the whole of the city," declared the jeweler emphatically, when Mark had examined and priced a score or so of solitaires. "Nobody can sell any cheaper than me. If you want to give a lady a handsome present, sheap, this is the place for you to buy it."

"Your prices do seem reasonable," admitted Mark. "But I think I ought to look farther—"

"D'you know vat you'll get by your 'lookin' farther'? You'll get left, that's vat you'll get. You'll go prowlin' an' pricin', an' then you'll find out that I'm tellin' you the truth. What for would I want to deceive you? An' then you'll come back here an' you'll expect me to

sell you a ring at the price I'm makin' you to-day. But I ain't goin' to be able to do it. Vy not, you ask me? I'll tell you vy not. Because these are all the rings I got left I'm goin' to sell at that price. I import these diamonds before the government raises the duty on diamonds. All the diamonds I get from now on I have to sell dear."

"But," exclaimed Mark unguardedly, "the tariff on diamonds has been reduced lately."

He looked to see the little jeweler abashed and discomfited by this public proclamation of the deception that he practiced upon his innocent customers, but he looked in vain. Mr. Ephraimson gazed at him with a pitying smile.

"Young shentlemans," he said, "who told you that big lie?"

As it was not diplomatic for Mark to state the source of his information concerning the tariff, he said, somewhat weakly:

"I read it in the papers."

Mr. Ephraimson laughed heartily.

"Them papers, they don't care vat they say. You take my advice, an' get von of these rings while you've got the chance."

"Oh, I guess they won't all be gone before evening, anyway," said Mark.

But again Mr. Ephraimson looked at him with benignant pity.

"Young man," he said, "by efenin' there von't be a single von of them rings left. You're a Gentile, ain't it? You don't know how this is the Jewish marryin' time? An' I have advertised in the papers that I got only twenty-five of these rings left. It ain't only the young men that's goin' to get married that will be here all day long, buyin' them. It's all sorts of people that know when to make an investment."

"Young man, the people on the East Side is wise people. When they have a little money, an' diamonds are sheap, they buy diamonds. They know then they've got somethin' they can get their money back on, any minute when they need it. The ladies buy them earrings an' rings an' fine, handsome pins. The shentlemens they buy them studs an' cuff buttons an' cravat pins. You ought



"Vy not, you ask me? I'll tell you vy not. Because these are all the rings I got left I'm goin' to sell at that price."

to let me sell you a cravat pin; that Mexican opal you've got on ain't in keepin' with your clothes an' you. Young man, by efenin' there won't be a diamond left in my place at the price I'm offerin' them to you for this mornin'."

But, in spite of the man's persuasive harangue, Mark escaped into the street without having bought a diamond. He had even shaken his head upon Mr. Ephraimson's latest offer, which was to put aside a ring and hold it for him until evening. And he left the eloquent little jeweler to put back the velvet tray of jewels and to open negotiations,

with undiminished vigor, with the two waiting ladies.

Making his way back to the customshouse, Mark began investigating the records of the Ephraimson Brothers, jewelers, of Allen Street. He found that they had been in business for about twelve years, and that during the first seven of these they had been in constant difficulties with the department.

There had been no form of smuggling generally known to the profession of smugglers that the Ephraimsons had not practiced during those early years. They had returned from their annual trips to Europe by way of al-

most every port on the Atlantic seaboard in order to attempt an unostentatious entry into their own city, thereby trusting to evade the rigorous examination of New York. They had brought in jewels secreted all over their persons—in the linings of their hats, in the linings of their coats, in their shoes. Sometimes they had come home, after the department had received from its foreign agents exact descriptions of their purchases, and had successfully evaded all duties, the most rigorous search of their persons, as well as of their baggage, failing to reveal anything dutiable. And later it had been discovered that one of the seamen on the vessel that they patronized had been doing their smuggling for them—a fact brought to light only when the Ephraimsons had ill-advisedly brought suit against the man for the theft of a certain part of the contraband goods.

For the past five years, however, their record had been blameless—singularly, almost suspiciously blameless. They had alternated in their trips abroad, Mr. M. Ephraimson with his wife making one trip, Mr. S. Ephraimson and his wife making a second one, each year. They had apparently given up the expensive game of fighting the government. They imported stones, to be sure, but they declared them. For the first year or two after their reform in this matter began, Mark discovered, they had been subjected to almost as close search as during the days of their blatant attempts to cheat the customs. But gradually, as their reform seemed permanent, the search had become not so close and insulting.

Yet there was no question that the Ephraimson Brothers were selling diamonds much less expensively than other jewelers throughout the city. Mark discussed the question with his chief. The surveyor laughed at him a little; the surveyor was apt to laugh at many of Mark's enthusiasms and to quote to him, and about him, the adage concerning the new broom.

"In all probability those men are fences," he said in reply to his young subordinate's surmises. "They seem to

have been steering a pretty straight course for the last four or five years as far as we're concerned. To be sure, if they are receiving stolen goods, it's crime, but it's not crime that the customs department is obliged to attend to, thank Heaven! I'm always relieved when it's another fellow's job to get after the crooks. I suppose there's a lot of that sort of thing going on with the small East Side jewelers. The only difference between the rest of them and the Ephraimsons would seem to be that the Ephraimsons really do sell cheaply what they have gained cheaply. They must have a vein of honesty somewhere in their make-up."

Mark found himself dissatisfied with the theory that the Ephraimsons merely conducted a receivership for stolen goods in conjunction with their jewelry business. For, in that case, there would be nothing for him—energetic, young Mr. Cotrely—to do. Still, for all his dislike of the theory, he was obliged to admit that there was some likelihood of its being the correct one.

He made another visit to the jeweler's within two or three months, and that astute gentleman recognized him. In spite of young Mr. Vermilion's example, there was not a bewildering number of strangers from outside the district among his customers.

"Aha!" he cried. "You have come back! Vat did I tell you? You have not found such sheep diamonds anywere in the city, now, have you? And you come back to buy von——"

"No," interrupted Mark. "I haven't come back to buy one, and it's lucky for me that I didn't buy one the other time."

"Young shentlemans, if you have found sheaper diamonds anywere," began Mr. Ephraimson solemnly, though a little crestfallenly also, "an' if they are genuine diamonds, I'll buy them off you for more than you paid for them. It vill be money in my pocket—if they are genuine stones. But I think you vas sheated."

"No, I didn't buy cheaper stones," replied Mark, and became brazenly dis-



In a few minutes he had discovered that the leather frame was lined with layers of jeweler's cotton, in which were concealed some seventy-five tissue-paper envelopes, each containing a stone of good luster.

honest. "But my girl went back on me, and I didn't need a ring, after all."

"Ah, so! But you have found another von by now? That was—*zwei-drei*—months ago! You have a new von. You want a ring for her?"

Mr. Ephraimson wasted no time whatever in pretended condolence. In a world full of girls, there would, of course, never be any difficulty about replacing one candidate for a solitaire diamond ring with another. But Mark

averred that this time his quest was not a solitaire for one of the faithless race of the women whom a man might marry, but a pair of earrings for one of that totally different tribe, an aunt.

"But I suppose I'll have to pay a little more for them. You didn't expect to have any diamonds left for sale at the old price," he hazarded.

"Young shentlemans," said the little jeweler in a whisper, leaning confidentially across the glass case, "you are a very lucky young fellow! Shall I tell you vy? I will tell you vy! I have just had vord from my brother that he sails for home this veek from Amsterdam vith the stock of a bankrupt diamont dealer. Ain't you the lucky young man, now? If my brother's letter had not come this mornin', tellin' me about that bankrupt an' how sheep he got the stock, I must have charged you a bigger price for the earrings than what I quote you vea you vas here before. But I get that letter. We save enough on that lot of diamonts to more than pay that higher tariff I tell you about. An' see how honest I am vith you! I treat you like an old customer—I treat you like an old friend! I sell you the prettiest pair of diamont earrings you ever saw, for a song—for a song, young shentlemans!"

He proceeded to define his song more exactly and to show Mark a pair of earrings of very well-matched, clear, moderate-sized stones. There was no question that the price was a low one for diamonds of such purity. But Mark demurred a little at taking them.

"Maybe your brother'll have something finer in the lot you say he's bringing over," he said. "I'd rather wait and see—my aunt's birthday isn't for three weeks yet." Mark pictured to himself the shudder with which his stately aunt would regard the vulgar and barbaric ornaments he was bespeaking for her. "When will your brother be back?"

Mr. Ephraimson supplied the information. His brother's steamer was due in about ten days. But he was voluble in declaring that it was quite impossible that the stock of the bankrupt Amster-

dam merchant would offer anything better and more reasonable than the beautiful drops that Mark was now refusing. But again, despite his importunities, young Mr. Cotelley made his escape from the shop diamondless, and reported to the office his grounds for believing that Mr. S. Ephraimson had better be closely inspected on his arrival.

It was rather a disappointment to him when, one afternoon, eight or nine days later, the deputy surveyors and the inspectors were summoned for their assignment to the various piers at which steamers were expected the next day, to find himself detailed to a vessel remote from that on which the homecoming jeweler was booked. However, his old friend, "Honest Jim" Deering was assigned to the Holland-American boat, and Mark urged him to induce the deputy surveyor in charge of that landing to assign him to Mr. S. Ephraimson.

"Honest Jim" was delighted at the suggestion. He had an unholy passion for the detection of smugglers. To catch them in falsehood, to tangle them in a dishonest maze of their own weaving, to bring them finally to book, and to enrich the treasury with the duties and the fines of which they had purposed to defraud the government, was bliss to him. Mark knew that if fate and the deputy surveyor at the Holland-American line should turn Mr. Samuel Ephraimson over to Deering's investigation, the search would be thorough. If that bankrupt Amsterdam jeweler's stock was not declared, if the bills and receipts for it were not forthcoming, how Deering would pounce upon the jeweler, worry him, badger him, and finally get the better of him! Mark was only sorry that he could not be there to see.

It happened much as forecast in his fancy, with the trifling exception of the fact that Deering's skill and Deering's persistency all went for nothing. Mr. and Mrs. S. Ephraimson, returning home modestly second class, submitted not only their luggage, but themselves to examination at Deering's insistence,

the lady rebelliously, the gentleman patiently. They had declared a moderate assortment of stones; the search revealed nothing undeclared. At Deering's announcement that Mr. Samuel Ephraimson's own brother was authority for the statement that he had bought out the stock of a bankrupt diamond merchant of Amsterdam, the returned traveler laughed, while his stout, dark wife snorted.

"My brother," said he, "is a good salesman. He knows that a bargain is all the better ven there is a story vith it. He knows a man likes to buy things sheep because some one else has been foolish or unlucky. It is a good story, that is all."

Deering hated to let them go, but he was finally obliged to release them and their baggage. They departed down the dock, Mr. Samuel Ephraimson still smiling at his brother's inventive talent, Mrs. Samuel Ephraimson still breathing defiance to the world, and threatening damage suits and other forms of reprisal against the government. And at the office it was generally agreed that "the laugh was on Cotrelly," who was held to be an abler inspector than he was a detective.

He bore the mockery good-temperedly enough, but tenaciously maintained that time would show him right. Which time proceeded to do in the following obliging manner:

About six months after these events, Mark, in looking through a New York Hungarian newspaper one afternoon, with the assistance of a man attached to the Federal district attorney's office as interpreter, came upon a small advertisement of his friends, the Ephraimson Brothers. Young men were adured to take advantage of an unequalled opportunity for buying engagement rings; ladies, young and old, were entreated not to let the grass grow beneath their feet in flying down the path to Ephraimson's for earrings, brooches, silverware. A great bankrupt stock sale it was that was advertised.

Mark was moved to examine the other foreign papers published in New York for circulation among the foreign

populace of the East Side, and in each he discovered proclamation of this same "opportunity of a lifetime."

He told his friend, the interpreter, of his experience with the Ephraimsons, and expressed his astonishment that so brisk a trade as theirs seemed in diamonds should go forward in so poor a neighborhood.

The interpreter explained it readily enough, and his explanation was the same as that advanced by the jeweler himself—many of these people bought diamonds as a form of investment, of insurance. Had Cotrelly never been surprised, he wanted to know, at the reports of robberies from dingy East Side flats of hundreds of dollars' worth of precious stones? Mark admitted that he had been amazed, in reading such reports, at the discrepancy between the value of the alleged plunder and the apparent means of the plundered, as indicated by their choice of abode.

"That's the explanation," said his friend. "They get fifty or a hundred dollars saved up, and they buy a diamond. It's not only a splendid, showy source of pleasure at the time, but it's a savings' bank account—with this improvement—it can be drawn upon at a moment's notice, and is not subject to runs upon it. Some of those jewelers in the poorer quarters do a perfectly amazing amount of business."

"But the customs invoices of these Ephraimsons," objected Mark thoughtfully, "do not seem to account for anything like the amount of jewelry that they have for sale."

And the interpreter, like the surveyor before him, suggested that Mark's acquaintances in the jewelry trade were probably receivers of stolen goods, as well as undoubtedly buyers at pawnbrokers' sales. And yet, in the obstinate mind of Mark, the smuggling theory persisted.

It was on the very heels of the advertisement that there was forwarded to the customhouse the exciting tale of a package addressed to L. Walther, in care of one of the Mills Hotels, and registered from Holland, that had been



In due course, Mr. L. Walther walked down into the net spread for him.

examined in that bureau of the post office that handles dutiable foreign mail. It was a framed photograph, the likeness of an elderly woman of strongly Teutonic cast; and it bore, visible through the glass of the frame, a German inscription to a "dear son, Louis, from his loving mother."

The examiner had been on the point

of restoring the photograph to its wrappings, when, through some inadvertence or carelessness on his part, a corner of the leather frame had been ripped. He had turned to examine the damage done with proper feelings of compunction; but as he had tried to press the edges of the leather together, to his amazement he had pressed out a

small folding of tissue paper. It contained a diamond.

Upon that discovery, the postal clerk had continued to press and to rip, and in a few minutes he had discovered that the leather frame was lined with layers of jeweler's cotton, in which were concealed some seventy-five tissue-paper envelopes, each containing a stone of good luster.

The customs bureau in the post office awaited instructions from headquarters.

The instructions were promptly given. The usual notification was to be sent to L. Walther at the address on the package to call at the foreign-registry department of the post office to receive a package addressed to him. And then detectives and inspectors were instructed to be on hand when Mr. Walther should respond to the summons.

Post-office clerks began at once to rack their memories for clues to L. Walther. Had he received former photographs from loving relatives in Europe? They consulted the records. Yes, certainly L. Walther had received registered packages containing photographs at various times during the last three or four years. And his address had been always the Mills Hotel. Had every picture carried the wealth found in this latest one? And who would L. Walther prove to be—the fortunate young man to whom an old German mother sent twenty thousand dollars' worth of diamonds along with her love and her likeness?

At the Mills Hotel, where information was sought as to the identity of L. Walther, pending his appearance to claim his loving mother's likeness, there was considerable ignorance of him. The superintendent looked over his register. Yes, there was an L. Walther registered about six months ago—and about six months before that—and about six months before that. The record ran back for three years, with L. Walther making a semiannual appearance. But the superintendent had no particular recollection of him. So many derelicts and drifts came there each day; so many men out of employment; so many men seeking employ-

ment and making the Mills Hotel their headquarters between jobs; so many men whom poverty and ill luck had ground to one likeness that one had to be remarkable to be remembered.

Nothing could be predicated of a man because he made semiannual visits. Perhaps he was one of the army of foreign farm hands whom each April and May sees in New York seeking a place on one of those play institutions known as city men's farms, and reappearing after the season is over. Perhaps he was anything! Perhaps he wasn't always the same Walther—there were others on the list besides the L. of the semiannual recurrent habit.

That night an L. Walther registered at the hotel, and the next morning he received the printed notification to call at the foreign-registry department of the post office and claim his package. And in due course, Mr. L. Walther walked down into the net spread for him.

Arrested and accused of the attempt to smuggle diamonds into the country, the youth—for he was not more than twenty or twenty-one, developed a magnificent capacity for silence. He declined to say anything whatever about himself, where he lived in the intervals of his Mills Hotel existence, whether he was employed or unemployed, whether his right name was L. Walther, or something entirely unlike that.

It was Mark who solved the mystery which threatened to prove temporarily embarrassing. The boy had remained firmly silent for twenty-four hours. The reason was apparent to the prosecuting officers—he was the tool, the agent, of some one whom he feared or to whom he was loyal, and whom he had determined to protect by absolute silence.

"He has probably heard that there would never be a conviction in a case of anything but direct, red-handed murder," said one of the lawyers of the Federal district attorney's office, "if the accused would never explain anything. Refusal to speak is a game that can't be beat. Let the other side do

its own work! That's his motto, and a blamed good one it is!"

On this sound principle of criminal procedure, Mr. Walther was persevering the second day after his arrest. He was haled again before the tribunal, and threatened with all manner of calamity if he did not reveal something about himself. But he continued to decline to oblige.

Mark had been away on an opium-smuggling case which had led him all over the State. He came back to the office while the boy was under examination by the commissioner. He was told that the surveyor was in court also, and he went over to seek his chief. But when he saw the boy—dark, sleek, obstinate, and sullen—he gave an exclamation.

"My old friend Ephraimson's clerk!" he cried.

Thus was the mystery of the Ephraimsons' cheap diamonds solved. Thus was the reform of the smuggling brothers explained on a more businesslike, a less emotional, basis than a change of heart. Each of the brothers, during his semiannual visit to the gem markets of Europe, had laid in a small supply of the favorite jewel of rich and poor to bring back with him personally and to be declared as his importation; while the larger part of his purchase had been mailed in registered photograph frames to the boy, whose real name was nothing like L. Walther, being, indeed, Morris Rolasky. And there, beneath the melting features of

a sweetheart, the captivating limbs of a group of baby nephews and nieces, the time-worn face of a grandparent, or an affectionate aunt, had reposed tens of thousands of dollars' worth of diamonds.

The duty upon them, to be sure, would have been only ten per cent, but the Ephraimsons belonged to the day of small things; and to them two or three thousand dollars saved by cheating the customs—quietly, unostentatiously, unbelligerently—was as good or even better than two or three thousand dollars earned in the sweat of their brows.

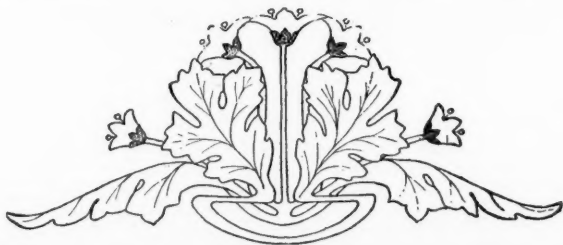
As for young Mr. Morris Rolasky, he was already owner of two or three nice little lots on Long Island! All of which was duly disclosed by a comparison of the customshouse records for the firm of Ephraimson Brothers with their own books, which were seized after Mark's identification of the prisoner.

It was Mr. M. Ephraimson who, seeing who had hastened his undoing, shook his head, and, speaking, gave Mark a name that he is not likely to lose as long as he stays in the customs service of his country.

"How sharper than a serpent's tooth," exclaimed the jeweler, "it is to have a thankless customer! And to think of the bargains I offered you, young shentlemans!"

Since which time Mr. Cotrelly has been known to his colleagues solely as "Serpent's Tooth."

"The Fall of the House of Von Glehn," the fourth of this series of stories of up-to-date smugglers that Virginia Middleton has written for SMITH'S, will appear in the February number.



INFLUENCE

By James Hay, Jr.

REMEMBER always this: You are your brother's keeper.

You are Influence. 'You cannot escape it—it is yours, a mine from which you must produce the slag of evil or the jewels of happiness.

Whether you dig in a ditch or make millions by your brain, you are every moment a living, flamelike agent, playing like a rapier or a stone crusher upon the lives of your associates and the sons of your associates.

The influence of you and men like you has founded religions and built their temples;

Or committed crimes and converted men to murder;

Or pointed the way to ideals and made them parts of human existence;

Or pillaged the poor and pitched the tents of misery.

Influence never dies.

Whether it springs into power with the suddenness of inspiration, or crawls through the years from the mahogany desk of a millionaire to the deformed child, robbed of youth by labor in his factory, it is everlasting.

In the Castle of Influence each word or each deed, of the alley, or of the countingroom, or of the studio, rests in its eternal place, made immortal by the immortality of the soul that cast it into the lap of humanity.

You can find it in the Gospels, where the great Preacher proclaimed that from His humble village His doctrine of love would envelop the earth;

Or in the life of the mad prince, driven to death by his contemplation of one crime;

Or in the vision of that lover who saw the blessed dam-ozel lean out from the gold bar of heaven to sing to him through the sheer depths of infinity.

You are your brother's keeper.

All that is in you drags him down or lifts him up—one word to-day may blast a life, and, through that life, put upon ten other lives a moral pestilence.

Regard your influence as a treasure house of wonders.

If you do, you will comfort those who mourn;

And guide into flowery fields feet that have trod only the bramble and the flint;

And throw down through the coming years a golden chain to loop together those things that are lovely, those things that are noble, those things that are high.

Profane the chambers of no man's heart. Sully the lilies of no woman's soul.

Battles have been won by a song—and a smile robs the grave of victory.



Barnabetta

By Helen R. Martin

Author of "The Parasite," "Tillie, a Mennonite Maid," "The Fighting Doctor," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY G. W. HARTING

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THEODORA had assumed, upon seeing David, Miss Dreary, and President Barrett in conference on the stage, that the promise she had exacted from her brother that morning before he had left her was being carried out, and that he was telling Doctor Barrett of the impossibility of his permitting Miss Dreary to receive the library appointment.

So when, an hour later, she met him at luncheon, feeling assured that the matter had been concluded according to her instructions, she was only mildly curious to hear an account of how Barrett had received the defeat of his purpose.

"Well?" she inquired, as they sipped their soup.

"What, dear?" David absently returned.

She glanced at him in surprise; she was accustomed to his alert attention when she spoke.

"Your talk with Doctor Barrett, David?"

"My talk—with Barnabetta? Oh, with Barrett? I didn't have any. Well, yes, a word or two, I believe. For a man of intelligence, the fellow is certainly insufferably prejudiced!"

"You mean prejudiced in favor of that girl?"

"Eh? No, not at all. He scolded her roundly under my very nose for the views she put forth in her oration."

"I should think he might!"

"But what a surprise you had, dear, hadn't you, in finding the young lady so different from what you had supposed?"

"Young 'lady'?"

"I mean Miss Dreary, of course. Isn't it she you're speaking of?"

"Certainly."

"What led you to get the impression, my dear, that she was 'a common Dutch country girl'?"

"Her father was a tinsmith, Mrs. Winthrop says, at that Dutch village, Reinhartz, and until the girl came here to college, a year and a half ago, she had never been on a railroad train."

"Astonishing!" exclaimed the judge, with an enthusiasm that his sister considered wholly irrelevant. "What a bright and shining example of my democratic theories, and what a blow to your superstition of 'good blood,' my dear, is that young lady's personality! Not another girl on the stage could hold a candle to her. Weren't you astonished at her?"

Theodora had indeed been astonished, and more than that—she had been appalled at her realization of the girl's "vital significance," as she expressed it; at the deep, quiet force that one felt embodied in that wholly feminine personality. To be sure, there was something primitive, even crude, in an earnestness that could make a young woman so unconscious of herself as almost to reveal her naked soul to a startled audience;

The first installment of "Barnabetta" appeared in the October number of SMITH'S.

yet, Theodora had to admit, Miss Dreary did not seem either primitive or crude.

"Doctor Barrett did not protest, then, against your decision not to accept Miss Dreary as a candidate?" she inquired.

David glanced at her in questioning surprise.

"But of course nothing was said about that after I found that you had been mistaken about her," he replied.

"Nothing was said?"

"Naturally not, when there was no necessity."

"No necessity to keep your word to me, David?"

"Why, my dear, you don't suppose I'd interfere with Barrett unless he were really making a serious blunder? And you saw, as well as I did, what an excellent candidate he *has* picked out."

"That is not the point. The girl is clever and unusual, of course—though very eccentric. But the point is, as I thought we had decided quite conclusively, that we must have a *trained* librarian. No up-to-date college employs anything else. You must see Doctor Barrett at once, David."

"I shouldn't think of opposing Miss Dreary's appointment, Theo."

Theodora laid down her spoon and looked at her brother. When had he ever told her that he "would not think" of doing a thing that she had requested of him?

"You would not think of keeping your promise to me, David?"

"A promise made under a mistaken impression, my dear."

"But a promise I *want* you to keep, David!"

"But why, dear?"

"Because I think it best for the college."

"My dear, we would search far before we'd find a librarian who would be better for the college than Miss Dreary will be—in my estimation."

"You don't seem to understand, David, that I don't *intend* to have this girl appointed; that I *wish* you to speak to Doctor Barrett at once, as you agreed to do."

"But, my dear," he asked, in sur-

prise, "why lay so much stress upon a matter of no vital importance?"

"I consider it of *most* vital importance."

"I am sorry for that, dear, for I cannot agree with you."

"But you will do as I wish, David? You will see Doctor Barrett and tell him of *our* candidate?"

"My dear, I can't think of it."

"Oh, yes, you can, David. For, if you don't, I shall ask for the position for *myself*, and shall spend the summer at a school for librarians. That is how important I consider it to have a trained librarian!"

"You take the position of librarian, my dear?" he laughed. "Very well, if it would amuse you. But it would scarcely seem worth while, I think, for you to rob that little girl of the position, which, she told me, would give her a chance to do postgraduate work with Barrett."

Theodora bent her face over her plate.

"I would scarcely place her interests before those of the college," she said.

"Shall I, then, tell Barrett that you want the place?" he asked incredulously.

"I don't want it. But I will take it rather than have an untrained librarian. I will take it if you will not tell Doctor Barrett that you will not support Miss Dreary."

"We might have Barrett up and talk it out with him?" Jordan suggested.

"I told you, David, that I did not wish Doctor Barrett to know that this came from me—he is too sensitive about dictation from a woman."

"I see," said Jordan slowly. "I see. Very well, dear, very well."

Jordan was a man of open mind and few prejudices. But there was one prejudice that he had never outgrown, and that was that a woman should have what she wants if it is in the power of man to give it to her. He found himself, therefore, just now, between the devil and the deep sea, and he could not, for the life of him, see any loophole of escape.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

It was at the *alumnæ* dance that night that the little drama resolving itself about our unsuspecting Barnabetta developed to a climax.

Though Barnabetta did not, of course, dance, she was not a wall-flower, for she was honored by the unprecedented distinction of having the college president lead her off during the first dance to an alcove to talk with her—the other *alumnæ* looking upon her with mingled envy and respect.

"I have a most disagreeable thing to tell you," Barrett, in an annoyed tone, announced to her when they were seated together. "Judge Jordan called to see me this afternoon about you."

"About me?"

"He's taken a fool notion into his head that we've got to have a trained librarian. Insists upon it! Has his candidate ready to hand! I explained to him that the last librarian used an up-to-date library system which you had learned from her. But he refused," said Barrett irritably, "unreasonably and obstinately refused, to support you."

"Why," said Barnabetta, looking daunted, "this morning he seemed so friendly!"

"It is such very great nonsense! Why should he meddle in my affairs like this?"

"But this morning, while he did suggest that I go to a summer library school, he afterward agreed with me that I'd do better to go to Europe."

"He usually knows his own mind. I can't understand this freak that he has taken."

"And he didn't say a word to *me*," added Barnabetta, "about another candidate. I think he was insincere with me, Doctor Barrett."

"Insincerity is not a characteristic of his, I must admit."

"Does his objecting to me," she asked anxiously, "mean that I won't get the position?"

"Yes—unless I decide to fight it out with him in the board—openly opposing my candidate to his."

"But that might be very bad for you, perhaps—as Judge Jordan is president of the board that appointed you."

"It might be very bad indeed for me—in more ways than one."

"Yes," responded Barnabetta understandingly; "he is also Miss Jordan's brother. Then you must not do it for me, Doctor Barrett."

"Don't you know that you are quite worth a man's risking his neck for you?"

"But that little library position would not be worth your risking *your* important position."

"Having you come back to Stevens, however, might be worth a considerable risk."

"I don't want you to take the risk—I shall refuse to be an applicant for the place!"

"Don't do anything rash! Wait. I am going to resort to diplomacy. I shall appeal to Miss Jordan to use her influence with her brother. *She* will help us out. If any one can influence him, she can. I'll talk to her about it here to-night when she comes."

"I'm not sure that I want the position if I'm not *wanted*!" said Barnabetta dubiously. "I'm like mamma's negro servant, who says that she would not go to a party she wasn't invited to if she never got anywhere."

"Jordan isn't the whole board. The rest of them never dream of objecting to any one I name for any position whatsoever. Leave the matter to me, Barnabetta."

"I shall be very glad to."

"I mentioned it to you to-night only to prepare you in case he does carry his point."

"I shall be very much disappointed if he does carry it," said Barnabetta wistfully.

"I shall do *my* best!" affirmed Barrett grimly.

It was evident that opposition had stirred his fighting blood.

There was, just here, a little stir in the room, then almost a hush—and every eye was turned toward the door as at this moment Miss Jordan entered—with her brother as an adjunct. She

was robed in a clinging black crape gown, against which her white neck and shoulders gleamed like alabaster. A large red rose lifted and fell upon her breast.

As she moved across the room with her brother to the receiving committee, her gracious bowing on all sides in response to the awed or admiring greetings that she received did not suggest to one single person in that room, except Mrs. Winthrop, how she reveled in the homage that she inspired; how scarcely one look or tone directed toward her was lost to her soft, swift glances; how her position of grand lady in Middleton fed her soul—as companionship with her equals or superiors in Boston could never do. Yet nothing whatever in her countenance or bearing betrayed this overweening egotism. Not even when her glance swept the two—Doctor Barrett and Barnabetta—seated together in the alcove, did the gentleness of her smile, the dreamy look of her dark eyes, waver in the least.

"What a mask she wears!" thought Mrs. Winthrop, as she watched her. "And she doesn't herself know that she is a *poseuse*."

"Isn't she beautiful!" breathed Barnabetta, as Miss Jordan, with her brother, moved past them with a gracious bow and smile to Barrett.

"It is the loveliness of her soul that makes her beautiful, Barnabetta!" Barrett fervently responded.

"Yes," Barnabetta as fervently agreed; "all the other women look so—so *common* beside her."

"Except *you*!"

It came from him involuntarily, and surprised him even more than it did Barnabetta. He looked at her suddenly, with a new keenness. It was really true—even Theodora's soft radiance could not dim that subtly fine spiritual quality embodied in Barnabetta, which made strangely impossible any idea of "commonness" in connection with her.

"By the way," he said abruptly, "do you know that I very strongly disap-

proved of your oration this morning? If I had known that you were *seriously* harboring these pernicious theories, I should long ago have set you straight."

"Pernicious?"

"To take the control of affairs out of the hands of the efficient few and place it in the hands of the incompetent masses—impossible! Control of the big interests of this or any nation always has been and always will be in the hands of a few, no matter what form of government you establish."

"I know that, Doctor Barrett. But should those 'few' be allowed to control the big interests for their own benefit—or for ours?"

"They should at least be free to reap the rich benefits of their own high ability," he maintained. "Where did you come by your ideas?"

"I found Henry George's 'Progress and Poverty' in the library one day—that started me. Since then I've been reading everything in that line that I could find. I don't understand much about social economy—but I do get hold of some big general principles that seem to me so true that I wonder the whole world doesn't believe them. I seem to myself to have been asleep all these years that I have never questioned the right and justice of things as they are. To be sure, living all my life in a place like Reinhartz, which is never touched by the great world movements—"

"Ah, here you are!" interrupted a deep voice, as at this moment Judge Jordan suddenly appeared before them, looking, in his evening dress, which revealed the outlines of his splendid frame, both handsome and powerful. "Barrett, I'm going to take this little girl away from you—I have to talk to her. May I, Miss Dreary?" he inquired, bending to offer his arm. "Pardon me, Barrett, but it's important."

And before either she or Barrett quite realized what was happening, the big man had swept her to her feet, and was leading her down the length of the room—leaving Barrett in a state of astonishment and chagrin that he but illy concealed from curious onlookers.



"I, also," Mrs. Dreary continued conversationally, "have been engaging in social intercourse this afternoon, calling on the Miss Goods—Eliza and Jane."

CHAPTER XXXV.

It was not until the evening's festivities were nearly over that Barrett found himself alone with Theodora, though he had been trying to find an opportunity to talk with her ever since Jordan had taken away Barnabetta. But Miss Jordan had been so much in de-

mand that he had been unable to speak with her except as one of a group; and Edgar Barrett did not fancy being one of a group. Neither did Theodora, for that matter, except as the center and pivot of the group.

He finally decided to get in his chance by taking her out to supper; but he was again foiled by her brother's appearing

and bearing her off to the dining hall.

Mrs. Winthrop had been watching these maneuvers, with a sense of satisfaction in her brother's persistence. The revelation, that morning, of the personality of the girl with whom she had one day discovered Edgar familiarly laughing and talking, and his honoring that same maiden to-night with a tête-à-tête in an alcove, had rasped her nerves with anxiety. That he should publicly make himself so cheap with a little nobody from a Dutch village! Where was his judgment?

It was during the supper in the college dining hall, as she watched Theodora with David, that, for the first time in her acquaintance with that young woman, she saw her lose for a moment her marvelous self-control, her perfect mask of dreamy, gentle loveliness, and turn upon David a look of black anger that made him draw back, appalled. Mrs. Winthrop breathed deep with thankfulness that Edgar was not by to witness this sudden, momentary transformation of the woman whom he idealized—it would too completely have disillusioned him. Judge Jordan's shocked amazement was testimony enough that Theodora was not wont, even in the privacy of home, to give way like that. What could he have done to his sister so to infuriate her?

Suddenly a grotesque possibility flashed upon Mrs. Winthrop that made her almost laugh aloud. Judge Jordan had sat out two dances in very earnest conversation with Miss Dreary—was Theodora troubled and angry about that? Oh, *wouldn't* it be funny if, after "protecting" her brother during all these years from "designing women," she should have to stand by and see him fall a prey to an obscure "Dutch" girl by the name of Barnabetta Dreary, from Reinhartz Station! Poor Theodora! Mrs. Winthrop's shoulders shook with silent laughter. If only that *would happen!* It would at least insure Edgar from a madness of folly. And if it came to a choice, on Barnabetta's part, between Edgar and Jordan—well, from the standpoint of the

Dreary girl, of course Jordan, with his wealth, would be far the better match.

"Anyway," Mrs. Winthrop grimly concluded, "if it actually comes to the worst—if Edgar *does* lose his head, and want to make a fool of himself—this Barnabetta is a simple country girl—she can be managed—and disposed of. I'd stop at *nothing* to save Edgar from such an enormity."

It was just after the supper that at last Barrett managed to lead Theodora away with him to a far corner.

"You are pale," he said solicitously, as soon as they were alone. "You are not feeling very fit?"

"A bit tired," she smiled.

She had entirely recovered from her momentary loss of self-control.

"I want to enlist your help, Theodora, in a little matter. I have run up against a snag in your dear brother's character that I had never suspected. He has a streak of blind obstinacy, hasn't he?"

"You have just discovered it?"

"I have never until to-night known him to stick to a point without a reason that seemed, at least to himself, to be a good one."

"What is it all about, Edgar?"

"He hasn't told you of his call on me this afternoon?"

"You mean concerning a new librarian?"

"Yes."

"He did casually mention it."

"You didn't know, then, that he insists that he wants a 'trained librarian'—won't consider any other sort—and will strenuously oppose my candidate, Miss Dreary, with one of his own selection? Now, of course, *you* know, Theodora, how simple, even trifling, is the work of our college library—and that the present librarian uses the identical system that a graduated librarian would use. What's more, she has taught this system to Bar—Miss Dreary."

"Yes?"

"In vain I explained all this to the judge. 'A trained librarian' he would have if he scaled the Alps to get her! Do you think *you* could make him see

reason? I know how much influence you have with him."

"But I don't quite catch your point, Edgar," she gently questioned. "Why should you object to a trained librarian?"

"I don't. Don't you see that Miss Dreary is practically trained?"

"But what difference can it make to you," she laughed, "*who* has the position?"

"It would give Miss Dreary a chance to do postgraduate work, and I am naturally interested in her progress—she has been an extraordinary student."

"I shouldn't, myself, want her to be in a position where she could propagate among the students such ideas as she gave forth this morning, Edgar."

"That would not be your brother's objection to her, however. I counted on your help, Theodora."

"You should have it, Edgar, if it were in my power to give it to you—you know that—my friend!" she added earnestly. "But I am afraid my intercession would come too late."

"Why, no; the board doesn't meet until next week."

"I am afraid," she said very sadly, "that David's opposition was purely personal and selfish, Edgar."

"How do you mean? How could it be?"

"He actually told me, when we were at supper, that he had engaged this Miss Dreary as his assistant in propagating his dreadful anarchism! She will assist him in preparing his lectures, in collecting data and literature, in the revision of his magazine and newspaper articles on socialism—or whatever it is he thinks that he believes! Oh, Edgar," cried Theodora, sorrow in her sweet voice, "the girl must be a most subtly designing creature! She is robbing me of all the influence I ever had with David! He seems *infatuated* with her!"

"Ah!" exclaimed Edgar darkly, a deep flush covering his face and neck. "Why," he said, bewildered, "he never met her, really to know her, until this morning, did he?"

"He *must* have—though he never

told me. But otherwise, how could they have hatched up this plot between them?"

"Plot?"

"To oppose your candidate, and all the time both of them *knowing* that she intended to be his assistant."

"Oh, no; *she* didn't know it. He must have offered her the position only to-night. She was as puzzled as I was when I told her this evening of his opposition to her."

"Edgar," she protested gently, and with much apparent reluctance, "aren't you a bit gullible where girlish simplicity is concerned?"

"One couldn't exaggerate the girlish simplicity of Barnabetta Dreary, Theodora. It is your brother's want of candor in dealing with me that I don't understand. Apparently, he really came to know Miss Dreary only this morning, yet he had *his* library candidate all ready, had been corresponding with her, and has now engaged Miss Dreary as his 'assistant.' Do you make it out?"

"I think Miss Dreary has misled you—they must have met often before."

"You are sure of that—or is it only a surmise?"

"Hardly a surmise. The thing is so *evident*."

"She has accepted the position he offered her?"

"With enthusiasm, he tells me."

"And without consulting me!"

In spite of himself, there had been all along a tone of hurt in Barrett's voice that did not serve to soften Theodora's sentiments toward Barnabetta.

Before she could reply, her brother suddenly appeared at her side. He bent down to her and spoke gravely:

"Theo, dear, I'm going to take Miss Dreary home in the motor. Do you want to come now—or shall I come back for you?"

She raised her dark, soft eyes to his face, then lowered them, and Barrett saw tears on her lashes.

"Don't bother about me, David. Doctor Barrett will take care of me—or I'll get home *somehow*."

"I shall come right back for you, if

you don't want to go now with—with us.”

She did not answer, did not raise her eyes, and Jordan, after an instant's waiting, went away.

“Oh!” breathed Theodora, the red rose on her bosom heaving tumultuously. “It is hard—hard—to feel myself so displaced! Edgar!” She appealed to him almost piteously. “You are my friend—help me to bear it!”

But Edgar, as from the window at which they sat he saw Jordan hand Barnabetta into his limousine, felt that he, too, needed help, and he was vaguely conscious that in his response to Theodora's appeal he did not do justice to their high friendship, did not rise to the level expected of him.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

The next morning a messenger brought a note to Barrett from Barnabetta, in which she announced with manifest satisfaction that she had accepted a position offered her the night before by Judge Jordan—as his assistant. She wrote:

I know you will be glad for my good fortune, that I have found a place of usefulness, a cause to work for, an object in life. And though I know that you are not in sympathy with what I believe, I must tell you that to me it seems a very great work—to help to bring home to people that the time is ripe for a real human brotherhood. Judge Jordan has set me quite afire with his own enthusiasm. I had been longing so for this very thing to happen—that my life should be given some direction, some definite purpose. I can hardly believe that I have really found it!

You will see that it is much better than the library position, glad as I should have been for that if *this* had not come to me. Judge Jordan says *any* one can do that library work—the matron or the janitor!

Barrett found himself much offended by this note. Barnabetta should have consulted him before accepting the position; she should not so readily, so joyfully, so almost contemptuously have discarded the position that he would have secured for her at the risk of his own.

He stayed sulkily away from her for a whole week after getting her note—

though he suffered in the consciousness that each day brought nearer her departure for Europe. He missed unbearably his daily meeting with her in the classroom.

At the end of a week, suddenly deciding that he would stand it no longer, he went late one afternoon to call on her. It was the first time that he had been inside the cottage in which she dwelt with her sprightly stepmother, and while he waited in the “parlor” for her to come downstairs, he contemplated with a shudder the awful get-up of the room—the “art rug,” the chromos, the tidies, and the other gay and festive appointments. Fancy his sister or Theodora discovering him paying a social call in a setting like this! He grinned at the bare idea.

But when Barnabetta appeared, he no longer thought of the room. He was amazed at the quickening of his whole being as, once again, after a week, he found himself alone with this girl who had taken such strange, such absurd possession of him. He wondered whether *she* felt new life in this renewal of relations between them.

She was, he recognized, that unusual type among her sex—a woman possessing great charm, and entirely unconscious of it. The power of a woman to charm was ordinarily, he was sure, in pretty close ratio to her realization of it. Until she did awaken to a sense of her power, her sword was apt to be sheathed. But the delicate fascination of Barnabetta seemed to lie in this very unconsciousness—like the charm of a child.

Almost as soon as they were seated, she began to talk eagerly of the work that she was to do for Judge Jordan when she returned from Europe in September. It was plain to him that that theme occupied her to the exclusion of any sense of wrong to her friend and well-wisher, Edgar Barrett. Before her ardent young enthusiasm, it seemed impossibly petty to broach his own sense of injury in her ignoring of *him* in this whole matter.

“But you know,” he ventured to say, “this ‘cause’ that you consider so im-

portant—it's all great tommyrot, Barnabetta—I'm sorry to tell you."

She regarded him in thoughtful silence for a moment.

"It is hard for me to understand how any one can be blind to what seems so obvious—at any rate, after the obvious has been pointed out."

"The 'obvious' is never the real truth—don't you know that?"

"The seemingly obvious, you mean. But the really obvious?"

"You've been carried away by Jordan's sophistries."

"No, not by 'Jordan's sophistries'—but by the injustices that I feel in life."

"Don't you know, child, that we all get pretty much what we deserve out of life, *whatever* the social structure?"

"No." She shook her head. "I don't know that."

"Judge Jordan will spoil you," said Barrett irritably, "with his absurd theories about the masses!"

"I was already 'spoiled' before he got hold of me. All he has done has been to point out to me some possible remedies for the wrongs under which we struggle."

"Remedies?" Barrett shrugged ironically.

"Don't you think that the remedies will be found just as soon as enough of us realize the unfairness that there is?" asked Barnabetta.

Before he could reply, a ring at the front-door bell interrupted them, and she, excusing herself, left the room to answer it.

Barrett felt intensely annoyed at the interruption. He was sure that, if given the chance, he could convince Barnabetta of the error of these socialistic ideas that she had so unfortunately imbibed. Surely he had *that* much influence with her! He strongly hoped that he was not going to be driven away by another visitor—possibly Jordan!

A murmur of voices at the front door, Barnabetta's greeting of some one in a tone of surprise, in which Barrett thought that he caught the name Jordan—then in reply, speaking now inside the hall, his startled ear caught the

visitor's voice—the familiar voice, not of Judge Jordan, but of Theodora!

If Miss Jordan felt any surprise at finding Doctor Barrett in the parlor, she did not betray it in the tenderly gracious greeting that she had for him, now as always. Though her presence here was inexplicable, and his perfectly natural, he was the one who showed embarrassment.

He wondered, as they all sat down, whether he was awake or dreaming. Miss Jordan calling on Barnabetta! What could be her purpose in such a condescension? The incongruity of these two in juxtaposition struck him—Theodora's exceeding complexity of thought and expression before Barnabetta's simplicity and directness.

He observed, with secret surprise, that Barnabetta in her black gown did not suffer in the least by comparison with the exquisite elegance of Theodora's appearance. He was struck also by the fact that the unstudied sincerity of Barnabetta's manner lent her a distinction not less marked than that of Theodora's polished grace. Every theory he held dear, of caste and heredity, was being challenged.

Theodora's conversation betrayed no hint of an explanation of this astonishing visit. Barnabetta seemed surprised and pleased, but not overwhelmed. She was, in fact, the most self-possessed of the three. Barrett felt immensely entertained by her manifest inability to grasp the fact that she was being honored.

"We were all so surprised, Miss Dreary," Theodora remarked, after she had spoken the usual perfunctory amenities of a first call, "by your startling graduation oration."

There was a subtly veiled amusement in her tone in referring to the oration, and an equally subtle note of patronage that made Barrett wince.

"'Startling'?" repeated Barnabetta. "But my ideas were not new. They were already old in the days of Plato."

"I see that my brother has been talking to you," said Theodora, "her amusement now quite open."

"Yes, he has talked to me a great deal. We have splendid talks."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, indeed!"

Miss Jordan turned from the girl as if dismissing her from her presence, and spoke to Barrett.

"I have the score of Strauss' new opera, Edgar. Can you come up to the house soon and let me play it for you? I know I can convert you to a love of Strauss if you will open your mind and heart to him—though it is a far cry, isn't it, from Wagner to Strauss?"

She had swung the talk quite out of Barnabetta's reach, obliging the girl to sit by in silence while she and Barrett chatted—an exclusion that would have been very awkward to one more sophisticated. Barnabetta, however, seemed perfectly content to lean back placidly in her chair and listen, taking in what she could, which was not much; for her forced, hothouse, get-educated-quick course at Stevens had not included the higher forms of any art except that of letters.

Barrett was the first to feel the discourtesy of her exclusion from the conversation. At the first possible chance he turned to her.

"Almost ready, are you, for your voyage?" he asked.

"Yes—and two ladies of Middletown who go abroad nearly every summer are going to let us travel with them. We are glad, for mamma and I did feel a little timid."

"Who are they, Barnabetta?"

He saw Theodora's slight stiffening at his calling the girl by her Christian name. Well, no wonder that she thought it incongruous!

"Miss Jane and Miss Eliza Good," answered Barnabetta.

"Good? Who on earth! Where did you run across them?"

"They live in the next cottage. They have always lived here. They are such lovely and intelligent women. I am sure you must know them, Miss Jordan?"

"No."

"Oh, what you have missed! I don't

believe there are any people in Middle-town more *worth* knowing."

Theodora glanced at Barrett with a smile.

"But, Miss Dreary," she explained patiently, "the Misses—Good, is it?—are not people one meets anywhere."

Barnabetta looked puzzled.

"I met them at the college library one day, and then they called to see me. I am sure that they would not object to meeting you, too, Miss Jordan. Why should they?"

Miss Jordan laughed softly.

"I dare say not," she answered kindly; then again turned to Barrett. "I have a bit of a manuscript to submit to you, my long-suffering friend."

"Ah? Fine! I'll call to-morrow morning, if I may?"

"I shall be at home."

"I suppose you know," Barrett asked Barnabetta, "that Miss Jordan is a poetess?"

"Oh, yes. Every one knows that."

"And yet," said Theodora pensively, "my limitation is that my message is for the few—the elect, if I may say so without egotism. I yearn, at times, to speak a more universal message—one that could reach to the depths as well as to the heights!"

She looked very wistful, and Barnabetta replied consolingly:

"But I am sure that the commonplace people do understand and enjoy your poetry, Miss Jordan."

There was an instant's rather awful silence—and Barnabetta added innocently:

"I do, for one."

Neither Theodora nor Barrett offered a reply.

"We may be thankful, I think," Barnabetta continued, still consolingly, "if even a few will listen seriously to what we have to say! I shall be when I take up my work with your brother, Miss Jordan."

"Yes?" said Theodora with a slight lift of her eyebrows. "You feel you *have* a message for your fellow men? And you are quite sure that the call to deliver it is a vital one?"

"Oh, no," laughed Barnabetta; "I



"The brother of your new friend, Theodora, my dear—Mr. Dreary."

don't at all feel that I am a Joan of Arc or a John the Baptist."

"It has always been so deeply borne in upon me," said Theodora solemnly, "that before one dares go forth with a message to humanity, one must make long and earnest—yes, *prayerful*—preparation."

"But," replied Barnabetta, rather appalled, "I couldn't take myself so seri-

ously, so importantly, Miss Jordan, as that! The best that I can do will be so insignificant."

"But how can you have courage to speak to humanity at all until, like the knights of old, you have spent *your* night in fasting and prayer before going upon your search for the Holy Grail?"

Barnabetta gazed at her in such child-

like, puzzled wonder that Barrett suddenly had a most unseemly desire to laugh—and for the first time, with a sharp shock, he felt in the wonderful Theodora a bit of a *poseuse*.

"To tell you the truth, Miss Jordan," said Barnabetta, "I think our cause much more 'vital,' as you say, and important to the world, than finding the Holy Grail ever was; but in these days we should think fasting and loss of sleep a bad preparation for good work of any kind."

"Don't blaspheme, *please!*" pleaded Theodora.

Barnabetta looked at her in silence.

"Miss Jordan simply means," Barrett unnecessarily explained, to cover the awkward pause, "that rashness, crudity, in dealing with the ignorant, emotional masses, is criminal."

"It is because of long centuries of rash, crude dealing with them—in spite of our Christian doctrine of love and human brotherhood—that there *are* 'ignorant, emotional masses'—isn't it?" asked Barnabetta.

"That," responded Barrett, "is the superficial view, of course. When one thinks more deeply, one sees how shallow, how impossible, is the superstition, taught by a few demagogues, of universal equality."

Just here, the opening of the front door, followed by the entrance, in street garb, of Mrs. Dreary—to Barrett's intense embarrassment—cut short their discussion.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Mrs. Dreary greeted the visitors with a graciousness not a shade less patronizing than Theodora's own, apologizing for not having appeared sooner, and explaining that she had been out to get some medicine for her bronchitis.

"Tis the irony of fate," she affirmed tragically, "that you two aristocrats should call on us on the very day when our colored hired girl didn't turn up—after all my pains to teach that negress the genteel and proper manner of admitting visitors! And either our crude

washwoman or Barnabetta herself had to answer the doorbell! The Scriptures tell us, 'Put not your trust in kings.' It should read, 'Put not your trust in coons!'"

Barrett had placed a chair for her, and she had sat down in the midst of them. He watched Barnabetta narrowly as Mrs. Dreary chatted, and he saw, from the soft light of happiness in her eyes as they rested upon her step-mother, that, fortunately enough, love blinded her to the oddities of her adopted parent.

"I, also," Mrs. Dreary continued conversationally, "have been engaging in social intercourse this afternoon, calling on the Miss Goods—Eliza and Jane. Also on our neighbor, Mrs. Spankhof—*a woman*," she added disparagingly, "of an insincere and worldly mind."

"What leads you to think that, mamma?" Barnabetta asked in surprise.

"Because, darling, she invariably asks me to 'step over to the library,' a sitting room behind the parlor without a single book in it. Yet she has the effrontery to call it 'the library'! I suppose she thinks it more *dressy* to call it a library. But I should think she'd put at least *one* book in it."

"I've been telling Miss Jordan," said Barnabetta, "what lovely women our friends are—Miss Eliza and Miss Jane. She has never met them. She has got the impression, somehow, that it is difficult to meet them. But I am sure a number of people know them."

"Oh, you would find them very sociable, Miss Jordan," Mrs. Dreary said reassuringly. "And they are very high-toned ladies. You would undoubtedly find it, as I do, a great advantage to know them."

"I do not doubt it," Theodora bowed.

"I always feel," said Mrs. Dreary, "that any one misses a great deal, if I may say so without conceit, in not knowing *me*."

"They certainly do," said Theodora earnestly.

"And no doubt, Miss Jordan, you feel the same about yourself. So I shall make it a point," she promised kindly,

"to introduce you and the Miss Goods to each other. No thanks necessary!" she protested, raising her jeweled hands.

"You are most kind." Miss Jordan rose to go. "I want to ask you, Mrs. Dreary," she said, as she offered her hand in parting, "whether I may have the pleasure, before you and your daughter sail, of having you lunch with me? Next Friday at half after one?"

Mrs. Dreary, promptly accepting in very flowery diction this invitation, seemed as innocent as Barnabetta herself of the distinction that it conferred. Barrett, in his astonishment, wondered again what could be Theodora's idea. Mrs. Dreary lunching at the Jordans!—the widow of a village tinsmith, who called you an "aristocrat" to your face!

During his walk home with Theodora, no slightest reference was made by either of them to the singular experience of the last half hour. They talked, not of the Drearys, but of Wagner and Strauss.

That night, at dinner with his sister, determining to find out whether the thing looked as strange to her as to him, Barrett carelessly mentioned that, having had an errand at Miss Dreary's, he had met Theodora there paying a call, and that she had invited the Drearys to lunch with her the following Friday.

Mrs. Winthrop met it with almost a shriek of laughter—which she instantly checked.

"But," inquired Barrett, annoyed by her laugh, "you have never met either Miss Dreary or her stepmother, have you?"

"Naturally *not*! Are they people one would meet?"

"Then why your amusement?"

"My dear! Theodora Jordan calling on people by the name of Dreary!—from Reinhartz Station!—tinsmiths, or blacksmiths, or something!"

Edgar bit his lip until it pained.

"Exactly," he said, when he could find his voice. "Why do you suppose she did it? That's what I'd like to know. Also, you understand, she invited them to lunch with her."

"I shall not be surprised, now, if she

goes so far as to invite me to meet them! To meet Mrs. and Miss Dreary!"

"Her reason can't be, you know, that she wishes to aid and abet her brother in his employing Miss Dreary, for Theodora holds herself absolutely aloof, on principle, from the cause that Jordan works for."

"Don't you see, my dear? She is afraid of the little Jezebel. Her brother is so evidently infatuated."

"Nonsense!" retorted Edgar, flushing hotly. "You have no ground for such an assumption. And Miss Dreary is as far from being a Jezebel as Theodora herself."

"Which," Mrs. Winthrop inwardly commented, "isn't very far!"

When, a few days before, Edgar had told her of his bewilderment over the apparently dishonorable behavior of Judge Jordan in regard to the library position, she had at once recognized Theodora's hand in it, and had realized at the same time how fatally that young woman's scheming had defeated the very ends that she had schemed for; had, in fact, played right into the hands of the enemy—necessitating further and deeper scheming to swing things back as she wished to have them.

"Theodora's idea, I think," she explained, "is to show up these people to David in all their crudity, as it will inevitably come out at the luncheon. The girl, of course, has a bit of education. But the mother is, I suppose, very bad?"

"She is not Barnabetta's own mother, remember."

"Her own mother was probably much worse," retorted Mrs. Winthrop.

"Theodora is above such petty maneuvering, Elizabeth!"

Mrs. Winthrop repressed another laugh.

"Theodora is only acting in self-defense, Edgar," she answered earnestly, "and trying to protect her brother from a great mistake—and to save for herself and her future husband her rightful inheritance—instead," she added warmly, "of standing by and letting it pass into the hands of the

Drearys! I'm sure that she is not to be criticized in the least for resorting to a bit of diplomacy for such legitimate ends."

"I suppose not," said Edgar coldly, his fingers unconsciously crushing hard a piece of bread.

He looked so white and miserable that Elizabeth was moved to compassion. But her recognition of the seriousness of his feeling for the person called "Barnabetta" strengthened her resolution to prevent, at all hazards, his "ruining himself."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Barrett did not see Barnabetta again until the day after the luncheon at the Jordans'—when they happened, that morning, to meet on the street. He stopped her and, acting impulsively, asked her to go with him for a country walk.

He noticed very soon, as they talked, that a change had come over her—a bright radiance seemed to envelop her, a gentle joyousness to possess her.

He was curious, knowing that she had never in her life seen anything better than her stepmother's taste, to learn her impressions of the Jordans' beautiful home.

"It is like a fairy palace, isn't it?" she said, almost with awe, when she referred to this, her very first, social experience. "To live in such a house would be like a dream to me—it couldn't seem real! People like the Jordans—and you, Doctor Barrett—that have always had beautiful things, can't get the wonderful pleasure from them that a person like me gets when now and then they come to me."

"One's pleasure becomes negative—we chafe at the *absence* of beauty and comfort. An effete state, perhaps."

"Then"—she hesitated—"there is another thing in which a person like me has the advantage of people like you and the Jordans."

"Well?"

"Do you know"—she seemed to grope for an expression of her thought—"I don't believe I ever dream of feeling su-

perior to any one? Except, perhaps," she added most unexpectedly, "to those little people who feel superior to *me*."

Barrett did not at once respond. Was she thrusting at *him*? They walked in silence for a few moments along the narrow path that ran through the woods which skirted one end of Middleton.

"Have you ever," he casually inquired after a moment, "met any one who took that tone to you—of superiority?"

"There was something of that among the college students—at first."

"I am sure that there was none of it at the last?"

"I didn't really notice when it began to disappear. It never hurt me much. The girls who acted that way seemed to me just vulgar and unkind. And when *you*, from the very first, gave me your friendship, how could I care what the others felt about me?"

"There is, I grant you, Barnabetta, in good society, a lot of what I know would seem to *you* just conventionalized vulgarity."

"To me? Surely to you, too?"

"Our point of view can hardly be the same."

"About *real* things?" she protested.

"I'm afraid some things seem very real to me that have never entered into your philosophy of life, Barnabetta."

"I'm afraid so, too. I've often thought so," she agreed with a little sigh.

"Oh, you have?" He felt it expedient to get away from such thin ice. "Tell me more of your visit to the Jordans," he suggested.

"Poor Judge Jordan!"

"What?"

"In his own home he seems nothing but a detail of the furnishing! I could not get the big-collie idea out of my head as I watched him and his sister. I think his sister's real feeling about him, if put into words, would read something like this: 'I sometimes think I won't keep a dog—they're handy to have about a house, but a great care!'"

"Barnabetta!" Barrett grinned—though at a certain intensity in her tone he felt far from being amused.

"Mind, I don't say that Miss Jordan doesn't faithfully see that he gets his dog biscuit and his bath once a week. Otherwise, Mr. Boffin *would* come up! But the sister is so sentimentally genteel——"

Barrett glanced down at the flushed face at his side. He had never seen her like this. What new phases she daily developed!

"'Genteel' is hardly a word that one would apply to Miss Jordan," he objected.

"Not to her—to her sentiments; she oozes genteel sentimentality from every pore."

"You don't like her, then?"

"She gives me too much the impression of having been always a big person among little people. It has made her little."

"Miss Jordan 'little'?"

"Too little, anyway, to recognize how very big her brother is, poor, dear man!"

"Your sympathy for Judge Jordan seems to me quite uncalled for," said Barrett coldly.

She raised troubled eyes to his.

"Does it?" she asked, with a momentary sadness. "Miss Jordan has always been on a pedestal in my imagination, but it now seems to me that I have found that my idol has feet of clay—while her brother is just pure gold all through—the dear!"

"You will be misunderstood if you talk like that," he reproved her, almost sternly.

"By you? I am talking to you."

"I am not at all sure that I understand this misplaced enthusiasm over a fat, middle-aged, foolish——"

"Oh!" she protested. "He isn't fat; he isn't foolish!"

"You can't deny that he is middle-aged!"

"Why shouldn't he be middle-aged?"

"To be sure," shrugged Barrett; "no one has a better right."

They had stopped in the path, and were regarding each other antagonistically. She did not dream that her unwonted flash of anger made her in his eyes—too much accustomed to sub-

servient flattery—more alluring than he had ever found her before.

Suddenly—he could not resist her—he took her two hands into his and drew her to him, infolded her, lifted her startled face, and pressed upon her lips a long, lingering kiss. Again and again he kissed her—self-condemnation at what he was doing mingling with ecstasy in doing it. For it was this that he had been hungering to do ever since his eyes had first beheld her; and here, in the solitude of the woods, her dear head on his breast, he fed to the full his passionate hunger for her lips.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

That afternoon, shut up in his own room, Barrett, pacing the floor by the hour, fought it out with himself. His sister herself could not more keenly have felt the incongruity, the madness, of what he was tempted to do; her pride of heritage was not more inordinate, her prejudices not more deeply rooted, than his own.

Yet he realized, as his sister's spiritual obsessions would never permit her to do, that Barnabetta's appeal was to the best, the finest in him—to those cultivated instincts that had recognized, from the first, beneath all her crudity, her essential quality; the something exquisite and true in the girl's soul that penetrated, haunted, possessed him.

He was so constituted that he shrank instinctively from any least physical contact with low-born, vulgar people. But about Barnabetta he had always had a whimsical fancy that the beauty of the soul informing her young body transformed her very flesh to that rare being, one of nature's aristocrats—so much more rare and fine than the species that the world creates and fosters.

"And yet," he writhed, "Mrs. Dreary my mother-in-law! Great God!"

From the depths of his soul, he wished that Barnabetta had never crossed his path. He knew, of course, that it was only his feeling for her that had held him back from long since having put to the test his chance with Theo-



The maid, thoroughly drilled by Mrs. Dreary for the solemn ceremony of "tending the door," followed her into the room and, thrusting a china saucer at her, demanded, "Tickets, please!"

dora. For, as an accompaniment to the purely intellectual admiration that Theodora inspired, her beauty and charm had always roused in him delicate thrills of passion, strong enough, perhaps, to have justified marriage.

Barnabetta, however, awakened in him an elemental force of feeling that he had not dreamed himself capable of—tethered as it had been through all the years of his manhood by the restraining, subduing influences of culture. And now, reacting from the long repression of his emotional life, his whole being

fiercely demanded possession of the woman of his desire, and would not be denied. Why, if she, simple child that she was, could know *what* he felt for her, how savagely he yearned for her, surely she would draw back afraid, appalled!

"The curse upon mankind," he bitterly reflected, "was not that he should earn his bread by the sweat of his brow—there's no curse in that—but that he should be pursued, goaded, hounded by the passion of love!"

For Barrett had reached the point

where he knew that he could hold out no longer. The lure of Barnabetta had won against odds that he had considered the unconquerable elements of his soul. He simply could not go on living without her—without this unsophisticated daughter of a village tinsmith!

It was with strangely mingled relief and despair that he came to this conclusion. Perhaps there is always a sense of relief in despair—the acceptance of the inevitable means the relaxing of a strain.

He knew, as clearly as his sister knew, that in the future he would regret a thousand times what he was about to do. With passionate sorrow he would regret it—for Barnabetta's sake as for his own. But he knew, too, that nothing under the sun could hold him back.

It was in this frame of mind that at last, toward the end of the afternoon, white and resolute, he came forth from his room to go straight to his sister.

He found her on the wide, shady piazza overlooking the campus, reading her blessed Boston *Transcript*.

His struggle with himself had been so strenuous, so fundamental, that by comparison his conflict with Elizabeth, long and painful as it was, was easy to meet with unwavering self-control.

"Go to see her, Elizabeth, and you will understand," was his reiterated advice; though he did not believe, really, that anything could make her understand.

"Go to see Mrs. and Miss Dreary? I? Be assured that if you persist in bringing this mortification upon our family, neither my daughter nor I will ever recognize these people as connections! And you have the effrontery, Edgar, to ask me to call on them! Why should I, please?"

"Then don't, Elizabeth. Nothing you do or leave undone can alter my decision."

"This is the consideration you think due me for exiling myself for two years for your sake, in this miserable little town."

"My sense of obligation will not take the form of allowing you to choose a wife for me."

"You have, in honor, already chosen. Your devoted attentions to Theodora for two years do not leave you *free* to marry this country girl."

"I am not at all sure that Theodora cares for me in that way."

"*Aren't* you? Poor, innocent lamb!" she retorted scathingly—but she quickly repressed this injudicious scorn of his blindness as to Theodora. "And you are sure, are you," she continued ironically, "that the tinsmith's daughter does reciprocate the ardent passion of—Edgar Barrett, of the Boston Barretts? Great heavens, Edgar, you must be crazy!"

"Love is a madness," he readily granted.

"You mean to tell me that you don't feel at all bound to Theodora?"

"Not even apologetic."

"Where is your sense of honor?"

"Departed with my prudence and common sense, perhaps. Understand, Elizabeth—*nothing* can weigh with me against my determination to marry Miss Dreary."

"Fancy your wedding announcements—'Mrs. Barnaby Dreary announces the marriage of her daughter, Barnabetta, to Doctor Edgar Holmes Barrett'—" She broke off with a derisive peal of laughter.

Edgar did not turn a hair.

"Can't you *see*, Edgar, the wild amusement of our clan?"

"To the devil with the clan!"

"I see the effect already," she remarked coldly, "of your vulgar associations."

Before he could reply, their attention was suddenly caught by a slouching figure coming up the long path leading from the public highway to the piazza where they sat—a country youth in holiday attire, as was attested by his spick-and-span "store suit" of awkward cut, his festive-looking necktie and hose, and his shoes of glaring yellow.

His shyness in accosting the lady and gentleman on the piazza took the form of a surly gruffness.

"Is this here where the boss of the female cemetery lives at?" he demanded rather than inquired.

"The president of Stevens College lives here," answered Barrett.

"Are you him, then, meebby? Heh?"

"Yes. What is it you want?"

"Why, fur to ast you to show me where my sister and my stepmom lives at."

"How should I know, young man?"

"Didn't you know they had a flittin' and that they come here to live?"

"A 'flittin'?"

"Yes, from Reinhartz to Middleton over."

"Your sister and your stepmother?"

Mrs. Winthrop quickly interposed, a touch of eagerness in her tone, while Barrett felt himself turn cold.

"Yes, I come from Reinhartz over to anyhow see 'em oncet, and I don't know right where they live at."

"You mean Mrs. and Miss Dreary?"

Mrs. Winthrop demanded, repressing her elation at this unlooked-for development, this powerful argument embodied in the flesh, against her brother's folly. The hand of Providence was in it, she piously recognized.

"To be sure," returned the young man. "It's Barnabetta Dreary where's my sister. I'm her brother, Jake. She's been comin' here to this here female cemetery this good while back a'ready to git good educated."

"And you have come to visit your sister?" Mrs. Winthrop kindly inquired. "Sit down, won't you?" she urged, determined to make the most of this happy chance to show Edgar *what* he was letting himself in for.

"Naw—I can't set a while. It's near time to eat. Don't you *know* where the folks lives at?"

"Doctor Barrett knows—he will show you. Shall you stop in Middleton long?"

"Whether I stay long? Well, I don't know if I do. I have to see oncet. I lived at my married brother's there fur a while, but his missus she's so ugly-dispositioned that way—she must be paid extry fur washin', and ironin', and mendin' fur me, and she didn't want to pack my dinner box no more. She sayed now I was to buy my dinner at the *caffee* in Lebanon—*she* wouldn't be

bothered. So I just up and sayed I'd go at boardin' then! But at the new boardin' house they was full up. And at the *ho-tel* it costs too expensive. So I come to git Barnabetta to come back and housekeep fur me—now she's through gettin' this here education a'ready. If I kin git her away from my stepmom oncet, she's better manageable."

"Why don't you get married yourself?" Barrett curtly suggested, his face stony.

"Well, there fur a while I conceited I *would* yet. I set up three or four Sunday nights with Liz Schnabel and oncet I took her buggy ridin'. Then here one day, our Emanuel he says to me:

"'Jakey, did you *ast* her yet?"

"'No, we ain't promised,' I says. 'I ain't sure, yet, that I'll *feel* fur astin' her."

"'Well,' he says, 'if you ain't done it yet, don't did it. Women ain't what they was! These days,' he says, 'they're just an *extry expense*,' he says."

"Well, that gimme cold feet, and I quit goin' to see Liz Schnabel."

He was checked by the noise of an automobile coming around the driveway to the front of the house—and the next instant, to Barrett's further petrifaction, Theodora alighted and came up the steps.

Barrett rose to give her his chair, and Mrs. Winthrop, with ill-concealed malice, at once presented the young man from Reinhartz.

"The brother of your new friend, Theodora, my dear—Mr. Dreary."

"Pleased to make your acquaintance," said poor Jake bashfully, his eyes held by the slim, graceful figure, and fine, beautiful face of the young lady before him.

Theodora, as she bowed distantly, gazed at the bucolic youth mournfully.

"Well," said Jake, "I ain't used to sich tony folks, so I guess I better be goin', then. It's anyhow near time to eat, ain't?"

Edgar promptly stepped to the edge of the piazza and directed him to the Drearys' cottage; and Jacob took his leave.

When Barrett turned back to the

piazza, he found that his sister had excused herself and gone indoors; he was alone with Theodora.

Meantime Mrs. Winthrop, in her own room, dressing for dinner, was assuring herself that, in a reaction of utter disgust, Edgar would certainly now insure himself against any further temptations to idiocy, by promptly betrothing himself to his eminently suitable mate, Theodora Jordan.

But when, later, she met him again at dinner, his still stony aspect told her nothing.

"Edgar?" she said questioningly.

"Well?"

"You have nothing to—to tell me?"

"As to what?"

Their eyes met challengingly.

"You haven't changed your mind?" she demanded. "You mean to ask the sister of that hoodlum to marry you?"

"I told you there was nothing that could stop me. Am I given to speaking idly?"

Mrs. Winthrop knew, then, that so far as checking *him* was concerned, all hope was over.

Next morning, however, at the earliest permissible hour, she would go to the girl herself.

CHAPTER XL.

Barnabetta sat in a low chair before the draped mantelpiece of her mother's cottage, and Barrett, tall and distinguished looking in evening dress—for he had come straight from dining with his sister—stood before her, his elbow on the draped mantel, his eyes upon the young girl in the low chair at his feet, his face grim, determined, white to the lips.

Barnabetta gazed up at him, a troubled sympathy in her eyes.

"You look so unhappy to-night," she said solicitously. "Would it help you to tell me what's the matter?"

"What disposition have you made of your brother, Barnabetta?"

He felt a pang for her as he asked the question, for surely she must suffer much mortification in such a relative. But though his question brought forth a tired sigh, she did not seem to wince.

"Jacob told us that he had seen you, and had poured out to you all his troubles. We have had a hard time convincing him that he will have to make up his mind to the expense of living at the Reinhartz Hotel until he decides to marry. He can easily afford it, but he is what my people call 'close.' I tell him that his having to pay his board at the hotel will help him to get over my long years of spoiling him; it will make him *fit* to be some nice girl's husband. He won't be fit until he gets over my spoiling."

"He goes back, then, at once, to Reinhartz?"

"To-morrow morning."

"I once criticized you in my heart, Barnabetta, for seeming unsisterly. I understand now."

"Yes?"

"Of course," he said deliberately, a slight hardness in his tone, "I can't help being thankful that your relations with your people are not very close."

"It is better so," she agreed, "for them and for me."

"Decidedly."

They were silent for a moment. Then she asked gently:

"Can't you tell me what is troubling you?—making you look so unhappy?"

"I am here to-night to tell you that, to tell you everything—to lay bare my soul to you, Barnabetta! Surely you expected me—after this morning?"

"Yes—I expected you—after this morning."

She spoke so quietly, so assuredly! She did not even change color. Unacknowledged to himself was his secret feeling that she would be overwhelmed and transported by the condescension, the heroic self-sacrifice, of his love for her. He did not dream that she would take any other view of it. Then why this unruffled demeanor, this serene confidence with which she informed him that, of course, she had expected him—after this morning? Was she so entirely sure of him, he wondered with a twinge of bitterness. But no!—his truer self defended her. It was her high ideal of his honor that had made her

sure that he would not fail her—after this morning. Her confidence was the highest compliment that she could pay him.

"I am here to ask you to help me, dear—we must help each other!" he broke forth from the depths of his harassed soul. "Dearest, we'll *need* to help each other!—yes, all the rest of our days!"

Her troubled eyes still gazed up into his, but their sympathy was changed now to bewilderment.

"I would rather give up everything else in the world, Barnabetta, than give up you! It would be insincere and, indeed, useless, for me to try to conceal from you what you must all along have seen for yourself—my long, hard struggle with myself. But I love you too deeply! My life would be worthless to me, dear, without you at my side!"

"I have seen your 'long, hard struggle'?" she repeated wonderingly. "No," she shook her head. "What do you mean?"

"You must know what I mean, dear," he insisted, with puritanic truthfulness; "the conflict of my overwhelming love for you against the—differences between us, dearest. I would not hurt you, dear child, but for the sake of our future peace, we must not begin our life together with any lack of candor."

She considered this for a moment with puckered brow.

"What you mean by our 'differences' would be, after all, unimportant, wouldn't they," she asked, "in the light of such a real thing as a great love?"

"Darling," he said tenderly, "you don't need to plead for yourself! Haven't I told you that love has conquered?"

"But conquered what? I see our differences—yes, indeed, I see them—they are plain enough. But that they should call for 'struggle' for 'conflict'? Have you really, as you seem to say, struggled hard and long against your—'overwhelming love' for me?"

The childlike innocence of her face, as she puzzled over it, convinced him of the sincerity of her question. She actually did not quite understand.

"And you speak," she continued, "of being willing to give up things for the sake of having me at your side. What things?"

"Nothing that I could count against the happiness of cherishing you, dear!"

"But then why was there a conflict, a struggle? Do you really mean that the trivial differences in our upbringing led you to fight hard against a great and real experience of your soul?—such as I should think 'love' would be with— with a man like you?"

His ardor underwent a slight chill at her cool, analytical catechism.

"Trivial differences, dear?" he repeated dubiously.

"They don't seem to you trivial?"

"I am afraid they do not, dearest," he replied very tenderly. "Better for all our future if you recognize at once that they are not trivial; that the difficulty of adjusting our lives harmoniously will lie in just that—our mutual recognition of our differences."

"It is 'our differences,' then, that make your—'love'—a terrible thing to you? You have struggled hard against falling in love with a green country girl?"

"I will be perfectly honest with you, Barnabetta—I love and honor you too much not to be so—yes, the strength of my love for you is measured by the realization I have of all that stands in the way of its happy fulfillment. That my love does not blind me to those impediments, and yet is too strong to let them conquer—that is my reason for being here to-night."

"I see."

"I knew that you must see, dearest."

"And you do not see?"—she smiled a bit sadly—"that what is really contemptible is not my origin and 'difference'—but your feeling about them?"

He flushed painfully. How often had her unconscious thrusts pierced his self-esteem with a sense of his own littleness! And how invariably, when so belittled in his own eyes, she had become to him more than ever desirable!

"Suppose, Doctor Barrett, you should suddenly discover that your grandfather



He took the book from her, and tossed it away. "Glorious old Scotchman! But we don't want anything to do with him this hot summer's day, do we?"

had been a—well, a tinsmith—would you be any the less *you*?"

"Had my grandfather been a—a tinsmith—I shouldn't be I at all."

"Perhaps not. Perhaps you'd be spiritually more robust. Less—flimsy, perhaps."

He looked at her fixedly for an instant.

"I came here to-night, Barnabetta, to ask you to be my wife."

"I have gathered that from your remarks."

Her tone was all sweetness.

"Well, Barnabetta?"

"Well, Doctor Barrett?"

"What is my answer, Barnabetta?"

"You are now 'proposing,' as they say—to me, are you, Doctor Barrett?"

"Dear! You have understood that all along!"

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"Some things you've said have almost misled me. You see, I am as inexperienced in proposals of marriage as in many other things. This is my first. Except Abel Buchter's."

"Barnabetta! I am perfectly sincere in asking you to marry me."

"I am sure that you were never insincere in your life."

"I would devote my life to making you happy."

"A poor purpose in life for a man! I'm not worth it—a tinsmith's daughter. And I'm afraid your realization of 'our differences' would make us unhappy in marriage, Doctor Barrett."

"I shall be infinitely happier than I could be without you—I know *that*!" he affirmed confidently.

"I see how well you have weighed it.

How much it sounds like my Brother Jacob's way of looking at marriage!"

He winced sharply.

"Dearest," he said, after an instant's eloquent silence, "do you *doubt* that your happiness would be the first and dearest object of my life?"

"And you start out by pointing out our great differences? Oh, no, no, Doctor Barrett, we could never make each other happy! I see, now, with you, that these differences are, indeed, real—you have *made* me see how real. A few weeks ago I think I would have felt that you honored me far, far too much in asking *me* to be your wife; but now——"

"Now?"

"Well, you will be surprised to hear it, but—I look higher."

"Higher?"

"For a husband who shall think me at least his equal; who will not feel that he can love me only at a fearful cost; who does not come to me, to ask me to marry him, with the pale, grim look of a man about to be hanged!"

"Barnabetta!"

He took a step toward her, but, rising, she stood at a distance from him—and he stopped.

"I have hurt you!" he pleaded miserably.

"No—indeed no. Be comforted—you could not hurt me—now."

"I have offended you by my too great frankness!"

"I thank you from my heart for your frankness—in opening my eyes to our differences."

"You say you 'look higher'?"

In spite of himself there was a note of incredulity in his voice.

"Much, much higher, Doctor Barrett."

"You do not love me, Barnabetta?"

"No," she answered gravely.

"But surely you have known how I love *you*?"

"Until this morning, I thought that you loved Miss Jordan."

"It is you I have always loved—since the first hour I ever looked into your face! Surely your friendship *can* ripen into love, Barnabetta?"

"It might have—until this hour. But you have revealed yourself to me as seeing life so strangely—seeing big things small and small things big—that you seem a stranger to me—and not the friend I have thought so wonderful—and almost worshiped. I see now how far apart you and I are—and always would be. We should be very, very unhappy together!"

To Edgar Barrett, the bitter hour that followed, during which he strove with this maiden who—to his consternation, to the upheaval of his very being—would have none of him, left him, at the end of that evening, aged by years.

And when later that night, Barnabetta found herself alone, feeling worn and sad after her long hour of painful and pitying, but firm, withstanding of Barrett's passionate wooing, she little dreamed that her refusal to marry him had enthroned her forever, as the queen of all women, in Edgar Barrett's soul.

CHAPTER XLI.

Promptly next morning, with firm, relentless purpose, Mrs. Winthrop betook herself to the Drearys' cottage.

She suspected that Edgar had been there the night before. She had not seen him since. He had not come to breakfast. Doubtless if he actually had gone and engaged himself to the girl, he was ashamed to show himself. And well he might be! Well, she would save him from himself, from his awful folly—and some day how he would thank her!

Her ring at the Drearys' cottage was answered by a negro maid. Mrs. Winthrop, who had decided that she did not care to have her visiting card displayed by the Drearys, merely asked to see Miss Dreary, and passed into the little parlor. But the maid, thoroughly drilled by Mrs. Dreary for the solemn ceremony of "tending the door," followed her into the room and, thrusting a china saucer at her, demanded, "Tickets, please!"

"Tell Miss Dreary Mrs. Winthrop. I have no cards."

While she waited, she occupied herself in wondering whether it could have

been possible that in such an awful room as this her brother had offered to marry the girl? Why, she would have been perfectly confident that a room like this, combined with that equally awful "Brother Jake," would have frozen the most ardent love of which Edgar were capable! How little one could count on the mysterious passion!

Barnabetta glided into the room with that peculiarly charming movement that was characteristic of her. Mrs. Winthrop feigned not to see her outstretched hand as, bowing distantly, she turned to a chair in the middle of the room. She decided, as Barnabetta sat down before her, that it was the girl's mourning that lent her such a look of refinement—really of breeding and distinction, strange to say. Her manner, too, was, to Mrs. Winthrop's surprise, perfectly self-possessed; not at all self-conscious. She was quiet, waiting for her visitor to state her errand. Apparently, she did not assume this to be a social call. And suddenly, something about the girl, some peculiar quality that one felt in her presence, made Mrs. Winthrop, to her own astonishment, feel for the first time an embarrassment in what she was going to do—a rare sensation in her experience. She looked at Barnabetta uncertainly.

"Miss Dreary," she began at last, "to be perfectly frank with you, I have come here to interpose in my brother's behalf."

Barnabetta gazed at her steadily, though her face flushed. She waited in silence.

"My brother is most unhappy, Miss Dreary."

"I hope," said Barnabetta sympathetically, "that he will soon get over that."

"He will never get over it—unless you save him from himself."

"I am afraid I can't do that. It is asking too much, Mrs. Winthrop—that I should so sacrifice myself."

"Of course, you are ambitious to do the best for yourself—but I am sure that you will be as wretchedly unhappy as he will be."

"But I am not unhappy—and I am quite sure that *he* will not be after a while."

"I realize," said Mrs. Winthrop coldly, "the uselessness of pleading with you to sacrifice yourself for his good."

"Yes—it is useless."

"You are remarkably candid, Miss Dreary!"

"It seems so strange that you should expect me to sacrifice myself for your brother."

"I don't expect it. It *would* be strange for me to expect it—and I am not a fool. I appeal, then, not to your womanliness, your tenderness, but to your ambition. Don't you know that you will *ruin* his career?"

"Oh, he will not take it so hard as that!"

"It will ruin him! Don't deceive yourself. Let me be as frank as you are and tell you plainly that none of his family would ever recognize you."

Barnabetta smiled.

"But how," she asked innocently, "can their resentment affect me? I have lived nearly twenty years without the—'recognition,' did you say?—of the Barrett family. So I think I shall be able to worry through."

"What is more," Mrs. Winthrop resolutely continued, coloring at the girl's cool effrontery, "my brother has very good prospects of a fine diplomatic appointment—the dream of his life! In such a position, his wife should be a woman of the highest social culture, Miss Dreary."

"But," reasoned Barnabetta, looking puzzled, "if things like that should decide a man's choice of a wife, Miss Jordan would make a far better—diplomatesse, is it?—than I could be."

"Exactly. Your common sense must recognize that. And in standing in *his* light, don't you see that you stand in your own?—that he will come to regret bitterly the mistake he has made?—that you will not be raised to his level, but will pull him down to yours?"

Barnabetta gazed at her as, slowly, the comprehension dawned upon her that they were both laboring under a

mistake. Then, after a moment, she spoke—deliberately, distinctly.

"I think your brother understands, Mrs. Winthrop, that I am unwilling to be dragged down to his level, and that I could not hope to lift him to mine."

It was Mrs. Winthrop's turn, now, to stare in perplexity.

"Miss Dreary," she abruptly demanded, "has my brother asked you to marry him?"

"Wouldn't you better ask him that, Mrs. Winthrop?"

"If Doctor Barrett has not yet asked you to marry him," affirmed Mrs. Winthrop, "you are perfectly aware that he means to. And I have come here to point out to you that in marrying him, you will gain nothing that you hope for."

"It is well, then, that I hope for nothing."

"You think his love alone will satisfy you? But *he* will not long remain satisfied with love alone. I know him as you do *not*, Miss Dreary."

"I am sure you do."

"Then be warned by me—my brother will not make you happy."

"If I loved your brother it would not be in the power of any of his family to keep me from marrying him."

"Do I understand that you are determined to marry him?"

"I suppose I may as well tell you that when Doctor Barrett asked me last night to marry him, I refused him. So," said Barnabetta, rising, "there's no use saying anything more."

But Mrs. Winthrop kept her seat, glaring at the girl incredulously, vindictively. That a little nobody like this should have the audacity to stand there and say that she had refused to marry Edgar Barrett!

"Then why," she demanded, "didn't you say so in the beginning?"

"I thought you were asking me to take back my refusal of your brother."

The absurdity of her mistake suddenly overwhelmed the girl, and she laughed helplessly.

"You thought I had come here to urge you to marry my brother?"

"Yes," laughed Barnabetta, wiping her eyes.

"You actually mean that you *did* refuse him?" It seemed wholly unbelievable. "But *why*, in the name of goodness?"

"I told him why."

"You are engaged, then, to Jordan?"

The vulgar impertinence of the woman was a revelation to Barnabetta of the ways of what her stepmother called "high life." She ignored the remark.

Mrs. Winthrop glared for a moment longer—then abruptly also rose.

"Well!" She came to a characteristically impulsive conclusion. "I declare I must say I can't wonder that Edgar is crazy about you! You certainly *are* a little trump! I'm half sorry I'm *not* going to have you for a sister-in-law!"

"I'm sorry I can't say that the regret is mutual," replied Barnabetta, with a quaint primness.

"Miss Dreary, may I ask a favor? My brother, you know, would be very angry if he learned of my having come here like this."

"Oh, I don't know—he told me pretty much the same things last night that you have said to me this morning—when he asked me to marry him."

"Mercy!"

"Yes," smiled Barnabetta; "he really did."

"As a family, you must think us—well, very disagreeable!"

"I am sure," said Barnabetta sympathetically, "you can't help being as you are."

"You pity and despise us? Well, we shall have to try to bear up under it."

Mrs. Winthrop offered her hand.

"Good morning, Miss Dreary. I've fallen in love with you myself!"

When, a little while later, Barnabetta, to relieve her feelings, strolled out for a long walk in the woods, where yesterday morning she had strolled with Edgar Barrett, she reflected that while good manners, or, rather, correct manners, were confined to the topmost social stratum, good breeding seemed to be rather a matter of temperament and of character, than of class.

CHAPTER XLII.

She had taken a book with her, and when Judge Jordan discovered her, she was seated under a tree, *not* reading the open volume in her hands. It was Carlyle's "Frederick, the Great."

"I thought it might improve my mind. But," she complained, as he sat down beside her, looking radiant at having found her, "with the thermometer at its present height, I can't manage to take in more than a sentence in every three and a half pages. I can easily believe all these stories about Carlyle's abusing his wife! Any man that could write in such *large capitals*! Look at this page! Think of the state of mind that could make a page like that! It's dangerous. I should be afraid to be married to it!"

He laughed, took the book from her, and tossed it away.

"Glorious old Scotchman! But we don't want anything to do with him this hot summer's day, do we?"

"He reduces me to pulp!" she sighed. "I shall struggle no longer to be great."

"No, don't struggle to be great—talk to *me*. I followed you here," he stated superfluously.

"And I was wondering how we *both* happened to come to this woods this morning," she said, quite insincerely.

"I had to see you to-day—I always have to see *you*, you know, to revive my faith in humanity after I've dined formally with a party of our leading citizens of Middleton—as I did last night. The Barretts had the courage to stay away. Very risky! Their absence was not favorably received."

"But the Barretts' objections to the Middleton dinner would not be the same as yours?" Barnabetta asked.

"No. Their objections are—snobish; mine, moral. The veneer that incrusts the real self of the average highly esteemed American in a town like this makes dinner talk, to put it mildly, difficult. I often wonder what would happen if, at one of their genteel gatherings, I came right out with my true opinions about anything at all. It would crack the dishes, I dare say.

In communities like this, strewn all over our broad map, nobody is ever known to think below the surface. Most people can't see a truth until it's universal property. Do you *know* what you are to me, little woman? I realized what last night as I sat among those Philistines, longing for you as a thirsty man longs for a spring. You are my safety valve, my comrade! What troubles me, though, is——"

He paused, and she looked up inquiringly.

"Don't stop—I'm so interested," she remarked.

"I've been thinking of a name for you—*my* name for you. I can't call you by that ponderous name with which your baptism afflicted you. And I refuse to address you longer as 'Miss Dreary,' since you are the only acquaintance I have who *isn't* dreary. To me you are to be—Betty. It's a quaint, winsome name—it's just *you*! May I?"

"If you like to. But it isn't my 'ponderous' name that you were going to say 'troubled' you?"

"No. Look here, Betty! There *must* be something of reciprocity in a real comradeship. Now I know what you are to me—but what troubles me is—am I anything at all to you?"

Her reply was unhesitating and from her heart.

"You are to me the truest man I have ever known—the only true one."

"If you'd had a larger acquaintance, I might take comfort from that. But Barrett and I, I believe, make up the list?"

"No matter how long the list, probably you would still be the one true man among them. I've learned how scarce true men are!"

"Betty, are you happy?"

"I doubt," she slowly answered, "whether people are ever very happy when circumstances or their dispositions force them to take life seriously. And yet, why shouldn't we be happy? I will be happy! I like the world; there are books, people, flowers, children, poetry, music, pictures. How can we not find happiness in such a lovely

world? I didn't always feel so, but I do now."

"You do have a way of taking Don Quixotic leaps. It's an exciting game to keep up with you, Betty!"

"Well, just now, I'm hating hum-drum. I want to be a vagabond, and 'roam at large o'er all this scene of man.'"

"And I, Betty, have always been a vagabond at heart. So you see we *are* mates—by the ruling of the gods! Would that I dared to hope that you would consent to 'roam at large' with me."

The color deepened in Barnabetta's cheeks, and her eyes were softly bright as they rested on the big man at her side—big, she felt, in so many ways; in his simplicity; in his humanity; in his abundant kindness; in his fidelity to himself; in his courage.

"I have so little to offer you, Betty! A commonplace, middle-aged, clumsy elephant! While you, dear, are so brilliant, so beautiful, so—"

She laughed involuntarily.

"Oh, no, I'm *not* beautiful! Please don't be so deceived in me!"

"Aren't you, Betty? I suppose I must take your word for it, but to me you are altogether lovely. I love your straight, brown hair, your hands that seem, somehow, to express you, your voice, your sincere eyes, the sweetness of your lips! And I love the mind and the heart of you! You are the only woman I have ever known with whom I am absolutely *at home*! Could you care for a ridiculous old fellow like me—"

"Take care—if it's my future husband that you are describing! I'm easily affronted!"

"Who has nothing to offer you, dear Betty, but his utter devotion!"

"May I ask you a few questions?" she inquired gently.

"I'll try to answer them."

"First, then, have you 'struggled long and hard against this overwhelming love'?"

"Only a few feeble kicks—because I felt that it wasn't fair to ask a radiant

young girl like you to throw herself away on an old—"

"Now!" she stopped him. "Second question—the 'differences' between us—your rearing and mine—are you sure you recognize them? You know that my father was a tinsmith, and that my brother is a stage driver?"

"You have mentioned it. What has that got to do with you, and me, and our love—if you do love me, Betty?"

"Third—you have a deep sense, have you, of all that you will have to give up in marrying me?"

"I have a sense of unworthiness in the thought of all that I shall gain—if you do stoop to me."

"I shall not 'stand in your light,' ruin your career?"

He suddenly took her chin in his hand and tilted up her face.

"It sounds damnably like the Barretts! *Have* they been at you?"

"Yes, they have been 'at' me!"

"The whole effete Barrett tribe isn't worth you—you true, wholesome, beautiful, young soul! A pair of snobs, I've always thought them!"

"Snobs! What are snobs?"

"People who substitute false values for real ones, Betty. A very persistent tendency, I've noticed, of petty minds."

"Yes," she said at length, "I believe they are snobs."

"I'm glad you know it. But don't let us waste time talking about them. I love you, and I want, more than I ever wanted anything in this world, to have you for my wife. Will you take me, Betty?"

"Yes, I will," she answered, her eyes meeting his with solemn earnestness.

"You love me?"

"Yes—I love you."

"You are sure that you know what love is?"

"I didn't know until I knew you. I know now."

"I believe you do, Betty! But you don't know *all* that it can mean." His voice trembled, as he took her into his arms. "We shall spend the rest of our lives, dear one, in discovering *that*!"



A Shocking Tale

By Wallace Irwin

ILLUSTRATED BY H.V. MAYER

WE was on the frigate *Jello*
 In the thirteenth parallel-o,
 Our canvas blowin' merry in the breeze,
Flip-flap!

When St. Elmo's fire magnetic
 Got to playin' quite pathetic
 From our bowsprit to our spars and axletrees,
Snip-snap!

Then them bright electric flashes
 Got ablaze in our mustaches
 And they jumped from nose to nose and ear to ear,
Dear, dear!

And before the mind could work it
 Lo! our crew had formed a circuit,
 Each man snappin' like a trolley far and near,
Here, here!

Like a string o' perfect pearls, sir,
 Or a ring o' chorus girls, sir,
 In that tight electric circle held like locks,
Quick, quick!

Each man's hand in other's grasp, sir,
By a wired, magnetic clasp, sir,
While the current circulated through our socks,
Snick-snick!

Captain Perkins, dancin' fidget
Like a movin'-picture midget,
Sort o' hollered to the others as they jerked,
Flap-flip!

"It is fine, in stress and weather,
For a crew to stand together,
But it looks like this was bein' overworked!"
Zap-zip!

And before them words was spoken
That St. Elmo's fire was broken
With such force we all was throwed clean off the ship.
Flip-flop!


Like a string o' beads that's shattered
Or a line o' schoolboys scattered
In a most treemenjous game o' crack the whip,
Tip-top!

Just how long I ain't no notion
We keflopped around the ocean;
But we soon regained the ship with rip and snort,
Row-wow!

And that sudden shock magnetic
Made us tars so energetic
That we all worked double duty back to port,
Kow-tow!



Santa Marlinspike



Holman F. Day

ILLUSTRATED BY VICTOR PERARD

CAP'N AARON SPROUL stood at one side of the village square in Scotaze and watched the thing go past. Though a marching brass band filled the air with resounding strains, the cap'n's face showed no enthusiasm.

Order of parade:

Item, Zeburee Nute, constable, wearing new nickel badge and air of deep importance.

Item, Cuxabexis County Silver Cornet Band, playing "Onward Christian Soldiers," with great emphasis on the bass.

Item, Liveryman Parrott's old barouche, opened, resembling the shell of a halved watermelon, and containing the Honorable J. Percival Bickford, plug-hatted; Hiram Look, retired showman, also plug-hatted; Batson Reeves, first selectman, ditto as to headgear, but fuzzy; and the Honorable Bickford's imported coach dog, Nero, installed in the seat beside the first selectman.

Item, single hitch containing Odbar Boadway, president of the Scotaze newly organized "League of Lifters," accompanied by the orator of the occasion, one Crommett Pepper Parkes, professional organizer of business booms, and expert on "whirlwind campaigns."

Item, marching members of the "League of Lifters," carrying wooden crowbars and wearing badges.

Item, stragglers.

Destination, town hall.

And after Cap'n Sproul had watched

the open mouth of town hall gulp down that parade, along with about every other human being in sight in the village square, he clasped his hands behind his back and trudged home.

The curt replies that he returned to his wife's queries further emphasized that lack of interest.

"But I think you should have gone in and listened to the man if only for the speech of the people, Aaron," complained Louada Murilla. "You're a prominent man in this town, and your coming away as you did must have attracted attention. It's a campaign to boost this town, and they'll look to you to help."

"You're a pretty good cook, Louada Murilla," was her husband's somewhat cryptic rejoinder. "If somebody brought you a toadstool puffball and asked you to use good eggs to whip up a frosting for it, would you do it?"

"Of course I wouldn't—but what has that got to do with—"

"That thing they're pulling off down there in the village to-day is frosting for that old puffball of a Bickford. He doesn't care any more about the real good of this town than he does about whether the Fiji Islanders have plenty of sirup for their flapjacks. They can't go to work and whip *me* into the frosting this town is daubing onto him."

"But he has done so much for the town since he has come back here to his old home and settled down, he has built—"

"He has built a monument for his own self wherever he could stick one in and get the town to support it. A lib'ry building with his name across it bigger'n the patch on a Portygee fisherman's pants—and extry taxes voted to support it; a boss trough in the village square with his name onto that—and the town had to pipe and drain; an organ in the meetinghouse, with his name across that—and a brass band out, and three cheers every time he has put his hand into his pocket. A string hitched onto everything he has ever given!"

"Aaron," pleaded his wife, "I wish you wouldn't talk so about Mr. Bickford. It's stirring up slurs for you all over town. They all say you are mad and jealous because he has come here, and is doing so much for the place, and is getting so popular."

"I ain't responsible for what fools say behind an honest man's back, Louada Murilla. If Kettle-belly Bickford had come back home here, and really wanted to help folks with the easy money he stole out of fake gold mines, I would never have said anything against what he was doing. But he has only come back here because he thinks it's a place where he can be toadied to. He would never sly up to the back door of a poor, hungry, old widder, where folks couldn't see him, and hand her a five-dollar bill any more'n he'd yank out his own teeth for fun.

"When a man needs a brass band and a parade every time he opens his pocketbook, he's spending his money on himself. I ain't hoorahing for the Bickford kind of philanthropist, and if this town wants to slur me for taking my stand as I have, let it go ahead and slur. The whole of 'em are calves chasing a steer—they'll wake up when supper time comes!"

That, then, was the position of Cap'n Aaron Sproul, prominent citizen, in the feud between him and the Honorable J. Percival Bickford, also prominent citizen—though the cap'n did not term it a feud. He did not give it that much prominence. He so informed Hiram Look when that energetic gentleman came around with hot insistency to in-

duce him to give up "that blastnation foolishness of his, and come in with the singers and help boost the town."

"I ain't much of a singer when the topic is Kettle-belly Bickford," stated the cap'n. "If he thinks, as you say, that I'm fighting him, he's got a wrong idee. I'm simply keeping away from him. I'm afraid he'll be trying to give me something. But as for you and the rest of 'em, take what you can get if that's your notion of things. There are folks who'll take the measles because they're free."

"But you ain't taking anything from the Honorable Bickford when you're coming into the League of Lifters," shouted Hiram.

"He got the thing up, didn't he, and hired the band, and headed the parade, and got that shouter down here from the city? Whose show is it, if it isn't his?"

"It's the town's show. We're going to do things here in this place. The new slogan of the Lifters is: 'Shake-up, snap, and system for Scotaze.' The citizens are glad to have the Honorable Bickford at the head of the movement. He belongs there."

"That's right," agreed the cap'n. "The figurehead of the *Jefferson P. Benn* never helped me any in sailing the ship, but I kept it up in front because it belonged there. It was a solid wooden head, and was covered with gilt," he continued.

"Have to have your nasty slur at a man you're jealous of, don't ye?" growled Hiram.

"There was some niggers took such a fancy to it one time when I was load-ing down at the mouth of the Kongo," proceeded the cap'n, still blandly indulging in retrospection, "that I sawed it off and swapped it with 'em for tusks. They took it off inshore into the bush and made an idol of it. Mebbe they organized a brass band, and had parades with it—I dunno."

"You're the most insulting, hang-back, sneering, and sassy old marlin-spike I ever run across in this world," blazed Hiram. "You're down on everything that means real progress. Let me

tell you this: We're going to make a Christmas present to this town."

"It was along about Christmas time that them niggers set up that figurehead for an idol. Is this statue of the Honorable Bickford going to wear its plug hat in its hand or on its head?"

"I'm wasting time talking to you, Sproul, and I know it. But the Christmas present the Honorable Bickford and the Lifters are going to make to this town will be system in one stocking and snap in the other. This town is going to be made to forge to the front. It's going to be made up to date in its methods. Pepper Parkes has given us our modern ideas, and now we're going to follow them out. And if an old marlinspike like you tries to stick itself into the wheel of progress, it'll get busted. You've had your last invitation to join in. Now good-day!"

Cap'n Sproul relighted his pipe and watched the departure of Mr. Look with perfect equanimity.

"I'm awful afraid you're making a mistake in being so offish in this matter, Aaron," his wife dared to say. "It's progress, and all the citizens are joining in."

"There are two kinds of progress in this world, Louada Murilla, and one kind has a brass band to lead it off. My rheumatism won't let me march behind a brass band."

For some weeks after the departure of the oratorical Pepper Parkes, the Lifters floundered about enthusiastically without being able to do much in a concrete form. The expert had advised them to hitch their wagon to a star, but there seemed to be no star that was near enough or tame enough to be harnessed. Scotaze was a little town, a somnolent town, a sidetracked town; and when the band wasn't playing, its citizens realized the difficulty of making a metropolis of it. There were even some taxpayers who awoke sufficiently to growl about the contract by which the town had bound itself to raise annually fifteen per cent of the cost of the new library building that had been donated by J. Percival Bickford. Possibly some of those growls were wafted

to the ears of the philanthropist. He gave a dinner in town hall to all comers, and wore a new white waistcoat for the occasion. The expansive front set off his double watch chain and his fobs very artistically.

The band played during the dinner and rendered "Hail to the Chief" when the Honorable Bickford rose to make his speech.

After he had mentioned the Lifters' motto, "Shake-up, snap, and system for Scotaze," and had dwelt upon the theme of "Onward and Upward," he arrived at what he termed the main feature of his discourse.

"Not far ahead of us," said he, "is that gladsome festival when all hearts grow soft and all human sympathies broaden. I refer to the merry Christmas-tide, when peace on earth and good will toward men should be the rule. I believe it has been conceded that I have been the humble means of pointing out to this dear town of my birth a new path, onward and upward; I have set forth on that path as the town's guide. Follow me, brothers and sisters. Christmas is a season of gifts. Give and ye shall receive. But, alas, there are those who must receive and cannot give back! It is sad that this is so, and I weep for the unfortunate."

Mr. Bickford paused for a moment with the air of a man willing to allow a short intermission for weeping, jangled his watch fobs, and went on:

"We must admit that Scotaze has not kept up with the march of the times. We admitted that when we organized the League of Lifters. Our industries have been stolen away from us by the big cities, and our boys and our girls have followed the industries. Alas, we have stood still! It's a great question, this gobbling up by the cities of the boys and girls and industries. I have not time now to dwell on it, but may make it a topic at another dinner which I will extend with my compliments."

Applause, led by the foreman of the Scotaze Ancient and Honorable Firemen's Association, the doughtiest diners in the county.

"It is sad, but it is true, that Scotaze



Cap'n Sproul relighted his pipe and watched the departure of Mr. Look with perfect equanimity.

has not held out opportunities, and that her people have fallen by the wayside. The poor we have always with us, as somebody has said. I wish to say that, while others have slept, I have been thinking up a plan for the benefit of the poor of this town. I am not ready to explain the plan in detail just yet, but I want to announce that I'm going to do something handsome for the poor of Scotaze. It will be something different from anything that has been done before, and will be done in my own way."

Then, while the band played, Mr. Bickford stood at the door and shook hands with all as they filed out.

Despite his resolution to have no more to say to "Old Cap'n Marlin-spike," Hiram Look halted next day at

rusty old marlinspike."

As the old showman turned to depart, the cap'n called to him, and his tones were so mild that Hiram stared in astonishment.

"I've said before, and I'll say it again, Hiram, that I stand ready to match Bickford, dollar for dollar, in doing for this town. I have never advertised what I've done—that's between me and the other fellow. When charity gets to be an advertising scheme for the one that's giving, and makes a holy show of the ones he is giving to, I stand up before all and say it ain't right.

"I don't know what Bickford proposes to do for the poor of this town, but I know the style of the man, and I'll bet ye apples to oakum that he's

the cap'n's gate. The cap'n was inhaling the crisp breezes of early winter, promenading his porch.

"I want to say to you, Sproul, that this time you'll have to swallow back your twits about the Honorable Bickford. When a man announces like he done last night that he's going to do something handsome for the poor of Scotaze, you can't sneer that he's building something so as to put his name across the front of it."

"If he follows his own way, he'll give 'em three cheers, a band concert, and a parade," was the cap'n's comment.

With unruffled front, he listened to Hiram's hot remarks anent "a stingy old salt hake," "a backbiting enemy of progress," "a salt-crusted old barnacle," "a

going to do something to hurt. He don't know no better. I ain't bragging on myself, Hiram, as any model of manners, morals, or general knowledge. I'm only an old cuss that wallowed the seas till I had saved enough to make old age comfortable, and have come ashore to settle down and use t'other fellow as best I know how. That ain't much for a creed, as some folks look at it, but I can stretch it enough to cover the main points of the Golden Rule. I'm going to stretch it a mite more."

He came to the edge of his porch and wagged a stubby forefinger.

"I'm going to stretch it enough so as to keep your Honorable Bickford from hurting t'other fellow by his fool notions. I've got a seaman's nose for smelling out trouble ahead, Hiram. It's dangerous business monkeying with the poor, even when a man goes at it with the best intentions. And when a man goes to meddling with the poor in a Yankee town, who are poor not because they want to be, but because the world has walked off and left them tripped in spite of themselves, he's apt to be more dangerous in a community than a man-eating tiger. The tiger eats bodies, but a fool with money gobbles self-respect—and when a real Yankee loses his self-respect, it takes his comfort out of heaven and adds to his smart in hell. From this time on, I'm trailing your Honorable Bickford in this town—and you go tell him so."

But the fact that Cap'n Sproul had constituted himself a watchdog did not seem to impress J. Percival Bickford. He proceeded briskly to develop his project.

On the brow of one of the domed hills that flanked Scotaze village was a spacious and ancient edifice that had been for years one of the landmarks of the town. It was the Union Meetinghouse, to which all the folks had flocked before creeds came to divide the parish—creeds that demanded their own special flavoring of the Gospel. For many years the Union Meetinghouse had been untenanted, but the forefathers had built sturdily of pumpkin pine, red ce-

dar, and iron oak, and the old building was a well-preserved patriarch.

The Honorable Bickford had a fawning town clerk as his lieutenant. From the records were secured the names of the old folks still alive, who were pewholders in the Union Meetinghouse, and the names of the heirs of those who were dead. Mr. Bickford went around with a fat wallet and bought up the pewholdings.

Then, being assured that he controlled the domain and the destinies of the meetinghouse, he swelled his chest, announced his great plan, and waited for applause. Sycophant selectmen, stingy taxpayers, pious hypocrites, Hiram Look—denied finer sensibilities—and others of his ilk, did applaud—and Mr. Bickford gave another dinner to allow his admiring townsfolk to make speeches of laudation.

Cap'n Aaron Sproul made a short speech prior to the dinner. He made it at his own home. It was when he heard what Bickford proposed to do. The speech consisted of a hearty, full-voweled, deep-sea oath delivered in the cap'n's best voice—and then he kept still and started on the warpath.

"I have founded my plan on two of the mottoes of the Lifters," explained Mr. Bickford suavely. "I believe at all times in adopting the sentiments of my townspeople. Upon the principles of shake-up and system shall I proceed."

He stated, what all knew, that the Scotaze poor farm, with its small story-and-a-half cottage, accommodated only a half dozen of the town's poor. The books of the selectmen showed that about a score of persons received help from the town to eke out their own scanty resources, but were allowed to live in their little homes, and thus maintain some show of self-respect and independence. Of course, Mr. Bickford did not put the situation that way. He referred to the plan as a lamentable lack of system in town affairs. He had figures to show how much more such a plan of help cost. Centralization is the trend of the times, he said; it is a day of institutions. Scotaze, he maintained, should put its paupers all into one home,

where they could rub elbows and amuse each other, and no longer be left alone to brood on their misfortunes. He showed that most of the poor in their homes were widows, old maids, and broken old bachelors. He pictured a most rosy state of affairs when all these should be congregated under one roof.

"Out of my own pocket I will pay for building over the Union Meeting-house," declared this distributor of sunshine to the poor. "The only thing I ask is that across its front shall appear the words: 'From Bickford's Bounty.' The town, by using system in regard to its paupers, can support them at much less expense, and I will do something handsome in the way of furniture, so that the place may be made a point of interest for visitors to town. A few excursions from other towns in the county should be arranged from time to time, with music, and the excursionists would march through and view this modern way of making the poor happy—the aforesaid poor to be neatly dressed and on view—and thus the fame of Scotaze as progressive will go abroad in the land."

Cap'n Sproul was present at that dinner. He had taken advantage of the "come-all-ye" invitation, sinking rancorous unwillingness to show himself at any event promoted by the hateful Bickford. As one who had taken to the trail, he wanted to get Bickford's plan early and at firsthand.

"This is my plan in outline—this much has been settled on, and work will be begun at once," stated the philanthropist. "I am open to any suggestions as to details. Let anybody helpfully minded speak."

"As one helpfully minded," said Cap'n Sproul, creating an apprehensive hush when he arose, "I'm going to suggest that Scotaze, seeing that she has got a brand-new idee—that of making a circus show of her paupers—charge all visitors a quarter admission. Have the concert at which said inmates will sing, 'Happy paupers all are we, cheers for Bickford, one, two, three!'—I say, have the concert extry, and we ought to be able to clear enough to

make the paupers self-supporting, and mebbe pay a little something into the town treasury. There's nothing like enterprise and shake-up, system, and snap."

"Those suggestions are not made in any spirit of good will toward this project," declared the Honorable Bickford, with anger. "This is more of the cheap satire of this individual who has tried to run this town in the past, and has failed. I here and now warn you, sir, that if you try to carry out any of your threats to interfere in my noble project in behalf of a Merry Christmas for the poor of our beloved Scotaze, I shall take the law to you."

"And, speaking as first selectman, and heartily agreeing with you as to this saving in the keep of paupers, I announce that you'll be backed up in all you do, both as to paupers and as to them that try to interfere with you," cried Batson Reeves.

Cap'n Sproul looked around on those who applauded this sentiment. He did not lose his temper, as he had done in Scotaze on other occasions when the populace had baited him.

"I know you don't want to listen to me," he said—and he was so unnaturally meek in his manner that they did listen, their curiosity being stirred. "The Honorable Bickford is right——" He paused, and the listeners applauded. "He is right in what he just said—I was using sarcasm. But I see it wasn't sharp enough to get through your hides. If you propose to make a puppet show of your paupers, I suppose you'll go ahead and do it. I came here to-night to say something to you."

He paused again, and they stretched their necks, expecting to hear something interesting.

"But after looking you over, I've decided I won't say it. I'll save my breath to cool another pot of pudding. I'll simply stand here and tell the Honorable Bickford that he's welcome to go ahead on his idea of a Merry Christmas for the poor of Scotaze. I'll also tell him I've got a plan of my own. And we'll wait and see which one of us



"I say, have the concert extry, and we ought to be able to clear enough to make the paupers self-supporting, and mebbe pay a little something into the town treasury."

gets the Santa Claus medal pinned onto him."

When the cap'n returned to his home that evening and sat down before the fire in somber state, and gazed into the embers in deep thought, his wife plied him with anxious questions, having well-defined fears—out of her knowledge of the cap'n's characteristics—as to what might have happened at that dinner.

"No, Louada Murilla, you're wrong this time," affirmed her husband. "I did *not* start any row down at that dinner. There was a good opportunity, but I didn't do it. Mebbe it's because Christmas is so near, and mebbe it's because I didn't want to waste effort. I didn't cuff old Bickford's fat chops, as you seem to figure. I had plenty of excuse to do it, for he sassed me in public. But mebbe the Christmas spirit is working strong in me. And I didn't make the speech I intended to make. Mebbe it was because I saw it would be like trying to make the scuttle butt

dance by whistling 'Yankee Doodle' to it. It was hard work to hold my tongue—but I done it. I figured it wasn't any use to talk to a lot of turkles so full of lift, and shake-up, and snap, and system, and Bickford's vittles.

"It's a great motto the chorus is singing in this town, with Bickford doing the solo part! Lift, eh? They'll lift poor, old Dorcas Dunham, for instance, out of the little cottage where she has nussed the dreams of her married life since poor, old Cahah died—where every rug tells her a story, with its strands and snippin's from wedding dresses and little folks' jackets. Shake-up, huh? That means shaking up an old saint like Bijie Corrisson, the blind man, who whistles gay as a lark while he is feeling his way along wires to find his way about his premises to do his chores—and almost makes both ends meet—and that's the kind of a stuffy, old Yankee *he* is! And they'll snap poor, old Xoa Blake out of her home, where she has shivered and doled old furniture of her

ancestors into the fire so as to keep from calling on the town for help. Then they'll apply their system and make a holy show of all the poor critters."

"I never thought of it in just that way before," faltered Louada Murilla. "Our sewing society has been talking the thing over, and we sort of thought it would be nice for the poor of the town to have a cozy home and live together."

"Blast it all, can't you see that you ain't taking Yankee dispositions into account at all?" stormed Cap'n Sproul. "You can't skim-coat a poorhouse proposition with a layer of soft-talk sugar, and expect it's going to taste good to proud old folks who have worked their fingers off all their lives, and are still trying to work, in spite of their poor, bent fingers, and dimming eyes, and aching backs. I'm considered to be a pretty hard man, Louada Murilla. I've lived a hard life, and I've had to seem hard on the outside. But, thank God, I'm soft enough underneath my shell to understand the feelings of Yankee old folks who are down and out by no fault of their own. Let that other crowd go ahead and try their plan of snap and shake-up, and call it a Christmas present to the poor in this town. I've got some other plans, and we'll see who'll come out ahead in the Santa Claus game."

"What are your plans?" inquired his wife timidly.

"I'm sorry to say that you ain't in a proper state of mind as yet to be trusted," returned her husband crisply. "After you get divorced from that sewing society, and ain't dazzled by old Bickford's white vest, I may drop you a hint or two."

He started for bed. On the way, he muttered to himself:

"I ain't just sure about them plans, myself, at present writing. But before I'll let Kettle-belly Bickford make a show of the poor, old critters in this town, I'll lasso him, stripe him red and yaller, hitch a tail onto him, and exhibit him around the country in a crate as the original Peruvian coodick-enterry."

There was snow on the ground in the

morning. During the night the slaty clouds that had banked the southern horizon for several days had crept up over the land, and the north wind had lanced the bulging masses as a knife might rip a bedtick, and down had come the feathers of the first snow. The snow made "slipping" for the teamsters, and Cap'n Sproul, when he visited the village for his mail, saw loads of lumber "snailing" up from the riverside mill toward the Union Meetinghouse.

The Honorable Bickford was briskly putting into operation the motto of the Lifters.

Indignation and a desire to whet further that indignation drew the cap'n up the hill on the trail of the lumber. He was still groping vaguely for ideas. He fully understood what sort of opposition he was fighting single-handed. As a man who had been selectman and overseer of the poor, he knew all the law, and realized that Bickford, Reeves, Look, and the affiliated Lifters had the law with them. All persons who are obliged to ask for town aid, even for a pittance to patch their own scanty means during a hard winter, become paupers by law, and may be removed by law to any domicile the town may provide or designate.

On a knoll, flanked by a master builder and several admiring citizens, was the Honorable Bickford, superintending initial operations. A flock of workmen, gathered from surrounding towns, were on hand. Bickford was informing the assembled public that he proposed to give an exhibition of how quickly snap could renovate a building.

"When the glad Christmas morning dawns, gentlemen," he cried, "you will behold here on this hilltop a temple of benevolence, well filled with the happy poor; and when the sun kisses the gilt letters, 'From Bickford's Bounty,' I hope this town will appreciate my efforts and waft me the greetings of the season."

"I want to get mad about this thing and stay mad—pretty mad," growled the cap'n under his breath; "because I do a better job when I'm mad—but it won't do to get too mad. I've got to

back away from the sound of that voice."

In his retreat down the hill, he met an old man drawing a hand sled on which was propped an aged woman. The old man hobbled on as best he could, with a cane and a peg leg. His clothes were frayed and sun-faded, but the eyes above the knitted scarf, which was wound about his neck, were cheery.

"Me and 'Tildy are on the way to see the New Jerusalem that has been promised," he informed the cap'n, winking one of the cheery eyes. "Is it true that all the town paupers are going to set on a golden throne?"

"He may provide 'em if he thinks it'll make more of a circus show for excursion parties," growled the cap'n.

Then he gave kindly greeting to the aged woman, patting her shoulder. She could only smile at him. She was plainly a paralytic.

The old man was Bassett Howe, the Scotaze poor farm's inmate of longest record. The aged woman was Matilda Jenkins, and their poor little story had become very familiar to Cap'n Sproul when he was selectman.

They had been sweethearts before the evil days had come upon the Howes, Scotaze's pioneer family, and before paralysis had laid its numbing touch on 'Tildy. They had been estranged through error and mistaken pride. They were again lovers in their pathetic old age in the poorhouse—and the old man was her charioteer in the summer days, when he wheeled her chair, and in the winter days, when he drew the little hand sled.

"'Tildy's automobile," he called the racked, old chair; "'Tildy's royal sledge," he termed the hand sled.

And the eyes above the grizzled beard were always bright and cheery for her sake.

"What do they say, you folks down at the farm, about this dinky-foodle business?" demanded the cap'n, prodding his derogatory thumb over his shoulder in the direction of the meeting-house. "You've all heard what Bickford intends to do, haven't you?"

"Oh, the left hand knows what the

right is doing when the Honorable Bickford does anything—and so do all other hands." Then the wrinkled face became grave after the little laugh. "It's going to be all right for us poor, old, toughened critters who have been ticketed before the eyes of the world, and who have swallowed down the shame of it, Cap'n Sproul. We have stopped thinking about what the folks would say. We had to stop or go crazy. We can stand whatever they do to us—we folks at the farm. But it's going to be tough on them that have been struggling—counting the pennies, eating dry crusts, and burning old bedsteads—struggling, skinching, starving, and shivering, with the one hope that they can figure it so that they won't have to die on the town at last. It's going to break hearts right and left in this town, Cap'n Sproul. I know 'em—the proud, old folks—and you know 'em! The Howes were proud once—but I'm the last one that's left. I've had to stamp pride down and forget. But I can't help remembering to-day that my grandfather gave the land that Union Meetinghouse, there, stands on."

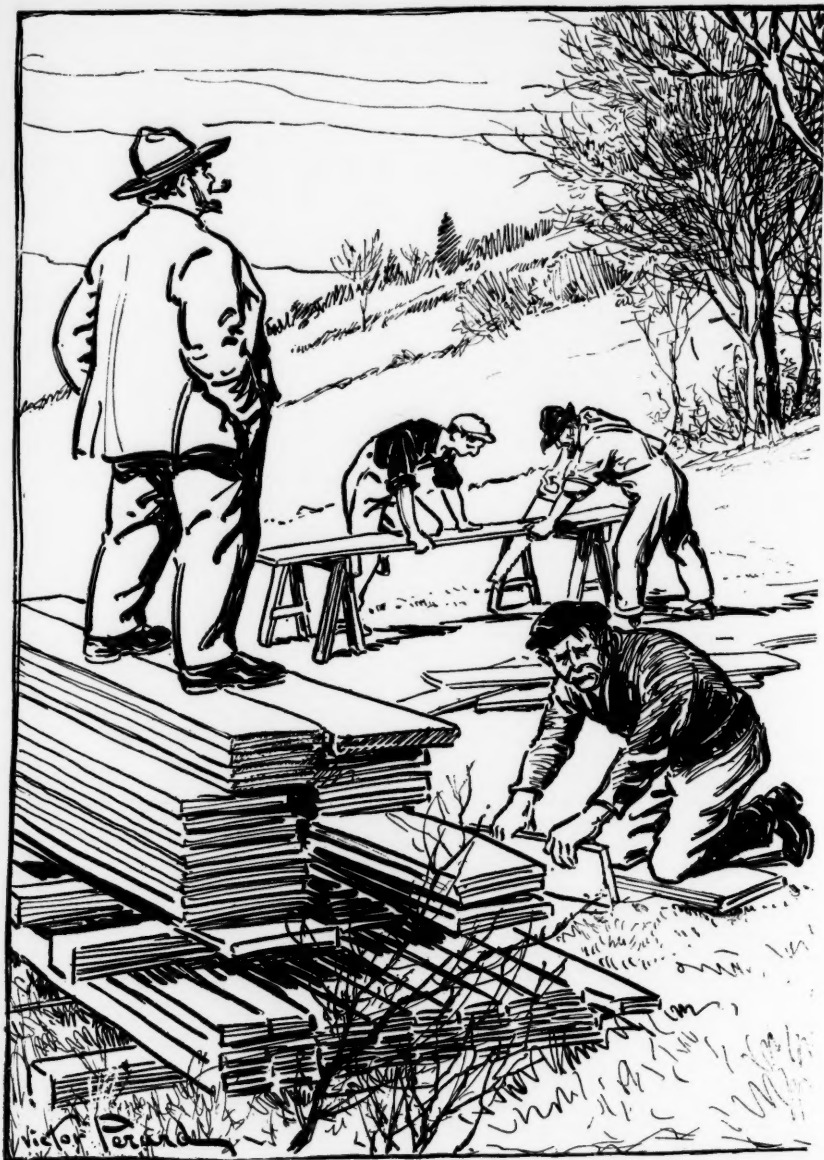
"It's quite a teeterboard—this world of living, and loving, and getting, and having, Bassett," quoth the cap'n. "But there ain't many folks that have got the philosophy of it the same as you have. You are right—there are going to be some hearts broken in this town."

"I'll take it on myself to go around and talk to 'em," said the old man, his eyes cheery once more. "Maybe I can say something to soothe 'em. For I'm the last of the Howes, and my grandfather gave the land for that meeting-house."

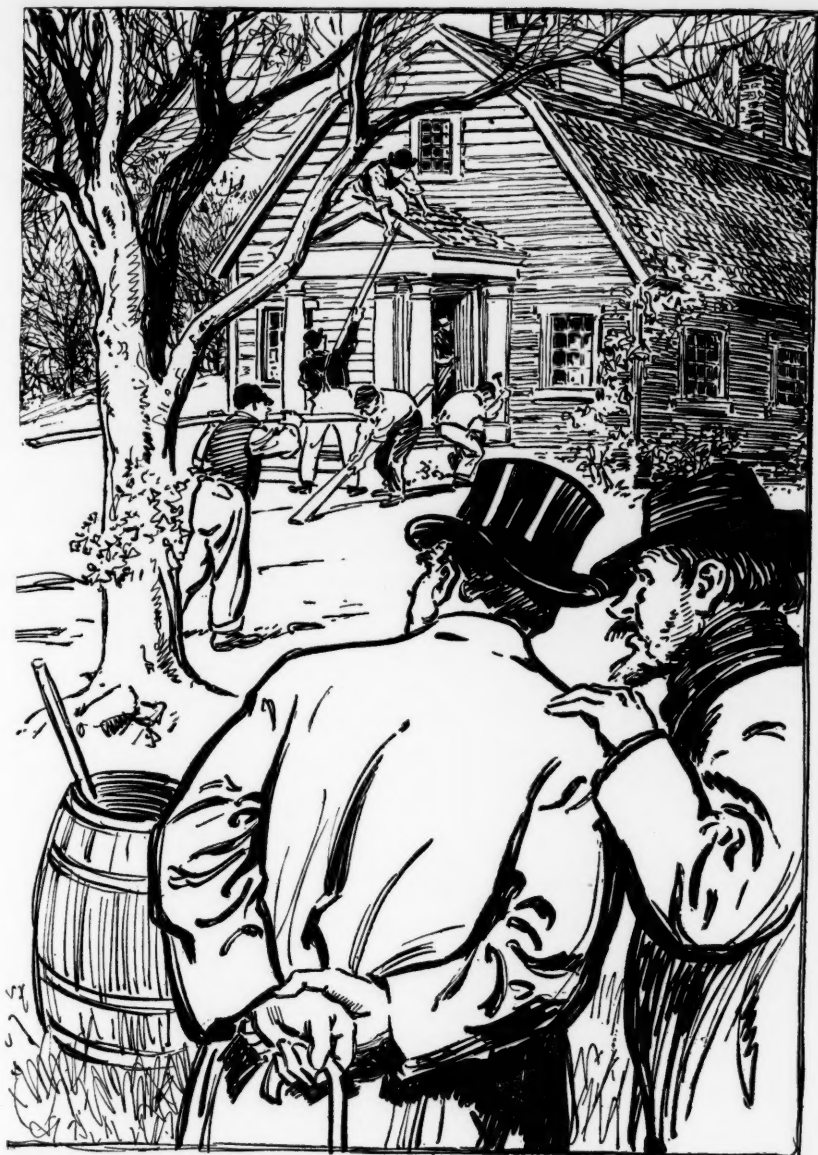
There was a little halt in his voice; it may have been a sob. There were two frozen drops on his cheek; they may have been tears. But the next moment he began to whistle a tune, and away he went, hauling the sled, and stabbing his peg leg into the snow to keep time to the tune.

The cap'n gazed after them, meditatively scratching the side of his head.

"I ain't so puffed up in my own conceit, like the Honorable Bickford, that



*The cap'n spent his days perched on a lumber pile on Meetinghouse Hill, watching the
to keep time to the rattle*



operations of renovating the old building. He smiled continually. He hummed tunes of carpenters' hammers.

I think I could take this world and build it over in a way to improve it all round," he mused. "Mebbe I couldn't make it a mite better if I tried. But, I swanny, if there ain't some things about it that could be tinkered a little, according to my way of thinking! I wouldn't have things so tipped upside down that the grandson of the man who gave the land for that meetinghouse would have to stand up there on that hilltop to-day and shiver beside that old toad in a sealskin coat, watching aforesaid old toad fix up a fancy poorhouse for that grandson and the other poor, shamed, old critters of this town. There are a lot of mean things done in this world under the name of making a Merry Christmas, but the shakers-up of Scotaze have shinned the mast about the highest in that line to date. And they're helped by the lift-halyard of the law, and I don't see any particular way of yanking 'em down."

He resumed his retreat down the hill, kicking his feet into the soft snow, and growling anathema.

He met old man Jordan, who was on his way to the store with his little bucket on his arm, and he scowled into the grin that the old gossip gave him.

"Latest say-so is that ye ain't making it very brisk, fighting the most pop'lar man in town," quizzed Jordan, his little eyes twinkling with petty malice. "Kings rise and kings get throwed down. You tried to boss this town too long, Cap'n Sproul."

The cap'n brushed past without condescending to reply to this senile banter.

"I guess the trouble with you is," called Jordan, "you can't join in the procession and sell something to the Honorable Bickford like the rest of us are doing. It's the main business in town just now. I sold him the Jordan pew in the old meetinghouse," he giggled, "and neither I nor the rest of the pew-holders had any right or title there at all. A man who buys right and left like the Honorable Bickford buys is a help to the town."

"What do you mean about the pew-holders having no right or title?" in-

quired the cap'n, showing sudden interest and walking back toward old man Jordan.

"None of your business," snapped the gossip, having succeeded in his aim—provoking the cap'n's curiosity, and then snubbing it impolitely.

But Cap'n Sproul, left alone in the highway, pulled off his cap, scratched his head long and thoughtfully, and stared up at the blue sky, as if seeking inspiration.

"When the Lord wants to help a man who's trying to be square, honest, and helpful to the poor, old critters, He doesn't always call up on the telephone, or take pen in hand to write," muttered the champion of Scotaze's poor. "I must say that He didn't give me a very broad hint when He set that old rattlesnake in my path to hiss at me, but it's a hint, just the same. I'm much obliged to you, Lord, for what I got. Now I'll go to work and use my brains. I reckon the Lord doesn't want fools doing His errands for Him, and that's why He makes His hints middling misty."

That afternoon Cap'n Sproul took the train for the county seat of Cuxabexis.

At the courthouse, in the office of the register of deeds, he was received with great cordiality, for he had been high sheriff of the county.

"I don't know the date of what I'm looking for, nor exactly what I expect to find," he informed the register, "but it'll come under the name of Howe, and is back so far that you'd better look in the book with the most dust on it."

Two hours later Cap'n Aaron Sproul, with a smooch of dust on the end of his nose, but with a real, merry. Santa Claus twinkle in his eyes, emerged from the gloomy recesses of the vaults of the registry office, and trudged his way downtown to the lawyer whom he trusted with his infrequent matters in law.

He arrived home in Scotaze on the late train that evening, appearing to his wife after his walk from the station with his beard frosted from his

breath, the tip of his nose ruddy, and the same merry twinkle in his eyes.

"You look like Santa Claus, Aaron," she told him, patting his cheek. "I'm so glad you have come out of those doldrums. It isn't worth your while to fret over the doings of J. Percival Bickford."

"I ain't going to fret any more, Louada Murilla," he declared, with a chuckle. "What he does from now on—especially what he does on the top of Meetinghouse Hill—will fill me with about the most rollicking Christmas spirit that ever bubbled in a man's soul. I love you, and I trust you, Louada Murilla, but human nature gets weak in a woman sometimes, especially when the Christmas spirit is stirring all around—and you might forget and say something to that sewing circle. You and me will pick this thing together when it's ripe—and it'll be tasty eating, come Christmas time."

And she knew her cap'n too well to insist on further confidences.

From that time on the attitude of Cap'n Aaron Sproul astonished the citizens of Scotaze, and produced real feelings of deep apprehension under the white waistcoat of the Honorable J. Percival Bickford. For the cap'n spent his days perched on a lumber pile on Meetinghouse Hill, watching the operation of renovating the old building. He left his perch only to walk about and slap himself back into warmth. He smiled continually. He hummed tunes to keep time to the rattle of carpenters' hammers.

"It ain't like him, unless he's got so jealous of you that he has lost his mind," stated Batson Reeves to the Honorable Bickford, as they stood at one side and gazed at the beaming cap'n. "They're deep connivers, them old sea captains, so they tell me. He may have a plot. He may intend to set fire to this building when you get it finished."

"He wouldn't dare to commit such a crime," blustered the philanthropist.

"Them deep-water fellers will dare to do most anything," insisted Reeves. "I

ain't so sure but what he'd better be arrested before he does the mischief."

But even the apprehensive Bickford balked at that suggestion. He continued to walk around the complacent cap'n at frequent intervals, and wore the look of worry that formerly had been the badge of the cap'n's demeanor.

One day he made bold to accost the man whose everlasting smile had so got upon his nerves.

"I know you're an enemy of mine, and are opposed to this plan. Why don't you go off and mind your own business, and let mine alone?" complained the sponsor of "Bickford's Bounty."

The cap'n gazed up at the gilt letters on the façade of the building.

"You never was more mistaken about a man in all your life, Bickford. Every board that has gone into that building has braced my spirits, and every clup of the hammer has played jig time to my soul. I'm so wholly satisfied with what is being done here that I'll hand you here and now five hundred dollars if you'll let me have my way about a few of the finishings, and plan one or two of the rooms."

"This is my own project, and I don't care to be associated with anybody else," stated Mr. Bickford stiffly. "I'll say very frankly that I'm suspicious of you, and I'd like it very much if you'd keep away from here."

"I can't keep away—I'm getting too much solid comfort out of it," protested the cap'n. "So much so that I'm going to resk pneumonia by staying here."

And he stayed—a veritable figure of a beaming Santa Claus, with frosted beard, twinkling eyes, and cheery chuckles, till all the work was finished.

The Honorable Bickford had planned and announced a dramatic opening of the new poorhouse; any tame and unobtrusive installation of its inmates would not have been considered by him for a moment. All the poor, old folks of the town were to be herded at town hall on Christmas forenoon, and were to be paraded up the hill behind a brass band, with the various local marchers,



Cap'n Sproul reached up and knocked off, one by one, the gill letters of the house's façade.

including the Ancient and Honorable Firemen's Association, performing escort duty. Mr. Bickford stated that he would ride ahead in a decorated sleigh, would address the citizens from the steps of the new institution, and then would usher the paupers into their new and happy home.

That program was not carried out.

When the approved and selected beaters-in of paupers went forth here and there to the little cottages with pungs to collect inmates, there were no paupers to be found.

Even the Scotaze poor farm had none to deliver. The keepers stated to Bickford's emissary that the paupers had been taken away the night before, and he supposed that Bickford had changed his plans, and had sent for the folks.

Then a breathless scout brought to the Honorable Bickford and his cohorts, waiting at town hall, the aston-

ishing news that all the poor folks were already at the big house on the hill.

The volunteer philanthropist did not organize any parade. He led the rush of citizens up the hill.

But the rush was stopped at a respectable distance from the building. There was a huge sign in front of the door, on which was painted: "Private Property—Trespassers Prosecuted." Four deputy sheriffs, imported from the county seat, guarded this sign and the entrance that it protected.

Cap'n Aaron Sproul stood on the front steps and faced the mob with serenity.

"I reckon you all slept pretty sound in this town last night," cried the cap'n in resonant tones. "You were

curled in your feather beds, and didn't hear the sound of Santa Claus' bells when he traveled around Scotaze, bringing the gifts of hope, and independence, and self-respect to the folks who were like to be robbed of them things. I went around town with my trusted helpers, and I brought to this house the poor, old folks of this town, and they're inside, and happy with their own furniture—their old rugs, their old dishes, their old chairs, beside which they have knelt and prayed all through the years. That fancy furniture you'll find stacked out back, Honorable Bickford, ready to be carted away wherever you want to take it."

"But this is not your scheme—it's not your plan—you have not a scrap of right to take these persons out of my hands," exploded Bickford, but the cap'n checked him with sea tones that rang out for all to hear.

"There's no long story to this—and there's no mystery to it. You thought you owned this property, Bickford, because you bought up the pewholdings. But the pewholders had no rights. Bassett Howe's grandfather gave this land to the Union Society, making the proviso in the deed that if the place should ever be abandoned as a house of public worship, the land and whatever buildings were on it should revert to the heirs. I have looked up that deed. I have tested the matter out with the best lawyer in this county, and I simply want to say to this crowd of Shakers-up, and Lifters, and Snappers, that Bassett Howe, sole heir, is now in possession of what's his, and all others must keep off unless he invites 'em in.

"I will also say that he has invited in for his Christmas guests the poor folks of this town—and after dinner—which will be private, without band music—the Scotaze Coöperative Society will be organized, with me as general manager and treasurer, and Bassett Howe as president. I want to inform the selectmen and taxpayers of this town that we are prepared to cane chairs, weave rugs, and knit stockings and mittens, and shall be self-supporting—and nobody need to worry any about this place so long as I'm treasurer. If anybody does worry, he'd better step out right now and say something about it."

Bickford, his face black with anger, was the only one to step out, but the tenor of his remarks had to do wholly with the money that he had spent on the place. He made a nasty fling about having been cheated out of his cash.

"You hold on for a minute. There's a ceremony connected with that part," cried the cap'n. "I always knew you were a piker. I'm glad you're showing yourself one before the people."

With a sailor's alacrity, the cap'n hustled up a ladder that had been left for his purpose against the porch. There was an ax on the top of the porch, and Cap'n Sproul reached up and knocked off, one by one, the gilt letters of the house's façade: "From Bickford's Bounty."

"Bickford," he called over the rail, when he had finished, "get your bills together, and send 'em to me, treasurer of the Scotaze Coöperative Society. We're full of lift, snap, and system, and we don't want any of your money invested here—though it has been pleasant to see your money go in. I have set and enjoyed it for some weeks."

"A lot of money you'll make out of this!" snarled Bickford. "You're spending your own money to spite me!"

"A remark that shows that you ain't filled with the Christmas spirit," retorted Cap'n Sproul. "As treasurer of this new scheme, I want to say that I'm laying up treasures on earth and in heaven that make your dirty money, Bickford, look like a punt beside a battleship. I've had five million dollars worth of Christmas fun since the sun went down last night. Before this dinner is over to-day, I'll be twice as rich as that in peace and good cheer and trust that the world ain't all wrong—and, ladies and gents, that's the kind of a Santy Claus I am."

He disappeared from their sight, crawling through a window into the castle whose command he had newly usurped—and, after a time, the muttering crowds of Scotaze dispersed. The general opinion was that this time Cap'n Aaron Sproul had let his spite carry him too far; he had been fool enough to take the paupers of Scotaze upon his hands.

But the "fool" that day carved the turkey for poor, old folks rescued from the bitterest ignominy of the Yankee soul—the poorhouse—for his little fiction of coöperation had consoled them, and had given them courage to work. He looked down the long table and saw Bassett Howe holding the wrinkled fingers of Tilda Jenkins in the home that had been so wonderfully given to them. He understood from the looks that were bent on him that charity, in this instance, had lost its sting.

"It's nice to be treasurer of a thriving institution with snap and system in it on a day like this," the "fool" informed Louada Murilla, who was helping him with the serving.

Our Bookshelf



A Plea for Poetry

By Elizabeth Newport Hepburn

Author of "Snaring the Bluebird," "Men, Women, and Work," etc.

IT is interesting to note that the ancients had an attitude toward the past exactly antipodal to our own. The Greeks talked of a long past age of gold, a wonder time when the world was young and men were noble, women fair, and life a flawless thing. Then came the age of silver, the age of brass, and, last and worst, the age of iron, in which crime, dishonor, all iniquities and cruelties flourished, and truth, honor, simplicity were dead.

Obviously, this contradicts evolution flatly, giving the lie to science; but perhaps there are moments when some of us feel more in sympathy with the lovely old myths than with many of our grim new facts. For the golden age was the age of heroism, the wonder age; above all, the time when poetry was a living, growing, developing art instead of a crystallized legend of the past.

We of to-day, living in our real iron age—the age of discovery, and invention, and mental achievement; the age of progress, as we proudly call it, of the best seller, and the problem play, and the muckrake magazine; the age of social conscience—and self-consciousness—are none the less in danger of missing some of the mental experiences that the old Greeks enjoyed, and that the world has known and loved in the era of David, of medieval monastic culture, of Elizabeth in England, the Medicis in Florence, the Duke of Wei-

mer in Germany, and of other great protectors and patrons of the arts, of the cult of beauty for its own sake.

This that we miss is not so much the creating of poetry and the existence of poets—both are in our midst to-day—as it is the universal holding to the love of poetry and to respect for poets. Apparently we consider the poet an unprofitable citizen, and poetry the mere froth and fluff of life, fit entertainment for the very young, the idle, and the wholly unpractical and useless man or woman. And yet I believe that there could hardly be a more egregious blunder; for poetry of some high sort has always been contemporary with progress, with noble thought and vigorous action. The poet's influence is precisely the same when it reaches us as when it charms children; it prepares the soil for the seed, touching the mind of child, or youth, or man with that quickening thrill of creative energy that, translated into action, makes the whole life fertile and beneficent to the race.

In other words, the child who has missed all the pleasures of imagination, who has not thrilled to noble verse, whether or not he understood the words, who has not heard the old myths, and fairy tales, and songs of the younger world, is in danger of walking through life tone deaf and color blind to much of the charm, the meaning, the melody and rhythm, and the vast, tragic beauty of human life.

He may also miss some pang of pity, some noble rage, some poignant and exquisite grief; but never to realize these counts, I think, for a subtle hardening, almost a paralysis of those emotions that normally make for the mellowing and enrichment of the mature human being.

Poetry, painting, sculpture, music, these surely count for a widening of horizon that we can ill dispense with. And in our era painting, sculpture, and more especially music, have won wide recognition from the great, democratic, increasingly educated public the world over. The children of my janitor, as well as of my friends, "take music lessons"; concerts, art galleries, and art schools abound, even in the lesser centers. It is only poetry, the flow of noble words expressing the passions and loves and hates of men, that seems in danger of becoming a lost art among us, despite the training of school and college.

Speak to the average educated young man or woman about the drama, the opera, mural decoration, the art of portraiture; mention Wagner, Bernard Shaw, Puvis de Chavannes, or Sargent; discuss present-day novelists—Arnold Bennett, Pierre de Coulevain, Edith Wharton, and many more—and your companion will respond intelligently, perhaps eloquently. But ask instead, "Have you read," or, "Do you remember," some special poem by Matthew Arnold, or Stephen Phillips, or Bliss Carmen; start the ball of conversation rolling back toward the great days of poetry, when Shelley and Keats tuned their splendid lyres, when Browning was alive, and Tennyson a toast at every table, and when, in our own country, Longfellow, and Whittier, and Emerson, and Whitman were charming the world; go back to the glow and passion of Byron, and still farther back to consider Dryden at his best; mention Marlowe, prince, if not king, of dramatic poets, his "Faustus," his "Hero and Leander," and then contemplate your hearer's countenance!

Frankly, he considers you a little mad, he is "not much interested in

poetry," and is obviously bored. Of course, in school and college "one had to read poetry," so the great names are familiar, but of interest in poetry as a living, developing, enchanting art, a window opening into a realm of *faërie*, you will find an amazing dearth—and this among people who would consider it a mark of ignorance for a grown man or woman never to have heard the operas of the Ring series!

Now and then you will find an enthusiast, one who really loves—and reads—great poetry; usually he or she is a student who likes to browse in libraries, and wander in woods and fields, and who, ten to one, has missed the mechanical drill and drudgery of our higher educational mill. For apparently poetry and the taste for it are not the product of the forcing house, but of life in the open, as it were; of the free world of old books and new books where one may dream and even idle a bit without constant competition as to scholarship and the insistent leading strings apparently essential to undergraduate work in our universities.

Of course, there are college men and women who care for poetry, and who write it, too—one of the most fanciful and exquisite bits of pure poetry that I know, "The Forsaken Merman," was written by Matthew Arnold, product of one of the world's most famous universities. Yet on the whole it seems to me that the taste for poetry is rarely developed at college, but rather is born at home, in some ramshackle garret, perhaps, or in a library of mellow, old books, or in the witching hour when a tired mother sings quaint ballads or reads flowing, splendid verse in a fashion that rounds out the melody and ends the day for children with a glimpse of heroes in a wonder world.

Not long ago I met a young man who mentioned his first joy in discovering that marvelous dedication to Wolcott Palestier that is one of the finest dedications of our century, and his pleasure in the poem was delightful and spontaneous. Possibly the man who wrote this dedication has done more than any one now living to rouse our own gen-

eration to a sense of the place and power of poetry in the interpretation of our own life. Men and women who read no other poets read Kipling. For in a practical, inventive, antisentimental age, Kipling has shown us the lure and the beauty of inanimate things, of engines, and turbines, and flying machines; he has sung us the song of the common, virile soldier—the human, hating, cursing, fearing, laughing, loving Tommy Atkins—instead of some picturesque dead hero of England's past. He has even made poetry, and sometimes most wonderful poetry, for little children, verses that croon and cuddle, and, best of all, convince not merely the child, but the uncrystallized adult as well. Take this bit from "The Lullaby of the Seal."

Where billow meets billow there soft be thy pillow.

Ah, weary wee flipperling, rest at thine ease:
The moon shall not wake thee nor shark
overtake thee,

Asleep in the arms of the slow swinging
seas.

But Kipling is, perhaps, the one living poet who needs no introduction to the casual reader. And because, some twenty years ago, he first thrilled the heart of youth with a realization of the potential poetry of our driving, modern world—showing us the poetic joy evocable from things that we had once deemed unpoetic—he has performed a service to his own age quite apart from all his achievements as a writer of novels, and of wonderful, epoch-making, short stories.

Actually it is quite possible that there is *nothing* in human life unrelated to, or unrelatable to, the poet's needs and the poet's powers. And therein lies the hope for the future of poets, and the probability that poetry will again become universally popular—as it surely is not now.

Some of the older poets worked in an artificial medium, some of them work thus to-day, but Burns, and Browning, and Whitman, and Kipling, and recent poets like Stephen Phillips, and Lawrence Hope, and John Hall Wheelock have helped to counteract this affecta-

tion, some of them appealing to the spirit, and others to the senses, but all to our real selves, singing of the vital, elemental humanity of all time as contrasted with the artificial frills of our civilization.

One of the most picturesque figures among modern poets is Lawrence Hope, as she is universally known. As I understand her story, she was married to an army officer stationed in India, and died tragically when she was not long past her teens. Yet in her brief life, she struck some quite new and wonderful chords in the gamut of human emotion that literature will not lose. She was primarily a poet of strong passionate appeal, and undoubtedly a morbid streak runs through almost all that she has done, yet much of her work has a haunting sweetness and beauty, and is obviously the product of a high order of mind. It is she who writes:

Men should be judged, not by their tint of skin,

The gods they serve, the vintage that they drink,

Nor by the way they fight or love or sin,

But by the quality of thought they think.

This "quality of thought" is, in the mind of the poet, frequently subjective, unutilitarian, and, as such, of peculiar value to our practical age. Man does not live by bread alone, or by steam, electricity, pure science, philanthropy, politics, or what we proudly call "modern education." We must have at our finger ends, not one means of expression, but all of them. We need not only inventors, and educators, and statesmen, and reformers; we need also poets, the work of those who have sung to us in the past, and of those who are singing now—how sweetly we do not always realize. And we need also the poets of the future, in the day of our children and our children's children.

I believe that the unfortunate man or woman who has not the echo of noble words far back in his inner consciousness must face hours of pain, and anxiety, and grief without any defense save that of sheer courage, perchance the courage of heartbreak. But for the "grown-up" whose memory is stocked

with dim, poetic, shadow shapes of noble beauty, a dear comfort is possible even in tragic hours. The mind goes back to old grooves, to beloved old words learned before we imagined their power or our own need, to the psalms of David with all their majesty and music, to grand old hymns, and to songs of the modern poets, one of whom has reminded us so simply

How in spite of woe and death
Gay is life and sweet is breath.

However luminous and noble it may be, prose seldom returns to us in the dark hours for consolation, and for grace at least to bear our burden in a knightly spirit. For prose, however splendid, is only memorable when it marches, and marching prose is akin to poetry. David, and St. John, and Shakespeare at their humanest come back to us now and then like some great, kind hand stretched to us in the darkness; the sheer beauty of Shelley is as restful to recall as we walk some burning city street as the loveliness of some pool hidden in a forest. And if we but realize it, there are men and women singing of our modern life as we know it, of our problems as we find them, poets peculiarly ours. Just as most of us find a vivid charm in the best contemporaneous fiction, because it depicts our own life, so, if we but look for it, there is a spell and a tonic for us in the work of poets not merely of the great past, but of the growing, personal present.

To name a few, there are Phillips, Henley, Robert Bridges, Edmund Gosse, and Kipling; Francis Thompson—so recently lost—Theodosia Garrison, Florence Wilkinson, John Hall Wheelock, John Vance Cheney, and many more, singing the songs of our twentieth-century life with all its perplexities, its new problems, old griefs, and splendid triumphs. Because they are of our generation, their appeal is particularly for us, beyond that wider appeal that assured genius makes to the ages, whether or not it be recognized to-day.

Recently a friend of mine lost a member of her family whom she had loved

all her life, and during that same week her newborn baby died. When I went to see her, I found no words to express the sympathy I felt—I could but sit mutely in the quiet room and touch her hand with fingers that weakly trembled. But some whim had led me to bring to her a tiny book, and months later she told me that a verse in that book had come to her poor, seared heart with the first balm of comfort, of human understanding, even a hint of that divine peace and consolation sprung from the wonderful source we call God.

The book was a little volume called "The Joy of Life," written by Theodosia Garrison, and the special poem, beginning, "Am I not kin to those high souls elate," is called "The Mother." Perhaps the tribute my friend paid the author is, after all, the greatest tribute that any artist may receive, the glad acknowledgment: "Here is one who knows and understands—and who yet makes the gift of life seem worth the having."

How many of us living in the world to-day have thrilled to the oft-quoted lines of Henley's ending with those gallant—and science may declare—inaccurate statements:

I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.

Scientifically inaccurate—because we are all but creatures of heredity and environment? Perhaps! And yet somehow spiritually and poetically true!

Again, despite all its Eastern mysticism and fatalism, and the fact that it has been quoted *ad nauseam*, how the modern phrasing of old Omar's philosophy has counted for a sort of desperate and painful pleasure—and courage—to thousands of us, here and now, because our age is beyond all others the age of life as it is, here, rather than as it may be, hereafter!

In short, when all is said, poetry is one of the consolations and compensations of life; without it the facts of birth and death, of sorrow and pain, the betraying years, the battle for place, even for mere food and shelter, would seem harder and sharper, without

beauty or charm. Like atmosphere in the landscape, poetry marries outlines, softens and mellows all things, casting a magic spell over that which we miscall commonplace until it shows the glinting gold of a revealed and ennobled beauty. The spell of poetry has made wonderful many lives, that would otherwise have been dreary, and the lack of it has spoiled many a man's zest for what should have been a veritable feast.

Looking into one's own world of men and women, it would seem sometimes that perhaps the grumblers, the misfits, the acidulous, the perennial objectors—called in slang idiom “kickers”—are merely those who have missed, possibly through no fault of their own, even a fleeting glimpse of the poetic vision. Possibly, when they were little, their mothers never told them fairy tales, but only fact stories, spoiled in the telling as fact stories so often are. Perhaps they never heard of Undine and Sintram, of the Garden of the Hesperides and the Table Round; perchance they never knew the joy of splendid words marching to music, words in themselves beautiful and strangely alluring to the child mind long before it grasps their shades of meaning, subtle, and exquisite, and satisfying to the mature, trained, critical intellect.

In what we are pleased to call “primitive times and heathen countries” the age of adolescence was also the marriage age, but we moderns have postponed marriage, and have in part transmuted those early years of sex awakening to a period of vivid emotional appreciation of many kinds of beauty, the spell of poetry among them; not merely the poetry of written language, but of all the forms of art—music, sculpture, architecture, painting.

Of course I use the phrase “in part” consciously; our civilization is so far incomplete that frequently the sex creativeness of the very young has not been carried into such desirable channels. But it is certain that the period of puberty is the time when the enthusiasm for beauty of every kind is most vital and amenable to the influence of environment and education. Of course,

many children as young as eight and ten love poetry in its simplest form, that of the rhythmic, written word; but at fourteen the words have begun to mean something beyond sheer melody, a gossamer of pale beauty. Then comes the most intense, joyous appreciation of heroic action as poetically narrated, of deftly woven fancies, and alluring appeals to ambition, courage, self-sacrifice, and, above all, to the love of sheer beauty for beauty's sake.

Indeed, our habit of postponing the age of courtship and marriage until full maturity has given youth—or should give youth—the opportunity to develop a whole range of splendid dreams and emotions that are directly traceable to the fact of sex awakening, but that are none the less noble and valuable, since their vital power may make for a larger and more vigorous manhood and womanhood, given the upward impetus at the psychological moment.

And if a taste for all that is poetic is often aroused at the period of early sex development and emotional consciousness, it may also linger on into middle life and into old age, sweetening and enriching existence, preserving until the end something of the fire, and vision, and glory of youth. For the thrill of noble words is not ephemeral.

He or she who learns to love poetry as a child, as a youth or maiden, will have a shield against the keen blade of materialism, and, in age, against the duller, yet deadlier, blade of ennui. The old man or woman who has kept intact the power to appreciate the sweep and rush of poetic expression has an unfading and an unfailling joy; in it there is no dross, no dependence upon others for entertainment, no let-down to levels of weakness or decadence.

In age, as in youth, a consciousness of beauty is one of the great gifts of Allah; and the beauty of words rhythmic, vibrating, appealing to the mind as well as to the senses, and to that something that we call the spiritual, is a beauty that outlives the mere brilliance of the passing show, as true love outlives the color and curve of first blossoming.



A Genuine Love Story

By Alice Ormond

ILLUSTRATED BY G. C. PUGSLEY

THE funny thing about it was that he never saw her in the daytime, or when any one else was around. Not that it was really funny, of course, seeing that she was on night duty; it was only Nesbit's half-delirious condition that wove out of a very ordinary happening a whole fabric of romance and mystery.

It took him some time to decide definitely the question of whether she was a dream or a reality. He did not discriminate in the least between fact and impossible fancy, although he tried to do so with an energy that left him exhausted after each fresh endeavor. All that he was ever quite sure of about that time was the room itself, which always kept the same greenish-gray walls and pallid ceiling, the same white iron bed and stand, and white enameled chair. Everything else was subject to change.

For example, at most times just outside the window was a brick wall, painted dull brown, a wall certainly opaque enough to shut off all the sunlight and apparently as hard and fast and immovable as Gibraltar itself; and yet that very wall had a favorite habit of fading away sometimes in the middle of the night when one least expected it, leaving a wide, clear space of night sky, with a pale-yellow moon—always a full moon—peering straight through the opening.

It was this habit of the wall's and the looking-in face of the moon that caused that first silly notion of his about the night nurse. He never saw her come or go, he never heard her; she was simply there beside his bed, looking down at him, the dim light shining through her pale-yellow hair from behind, and turning it into a misty halo.

Her face was shadowed, but he didn't need any one to tell him that it was beautiful; he felt its loveliness even with his eyes shut. It really was very natural that for a time he should have confused her with the moon itself. There was something exquisitely soothing about the way in which she leaned over him and touched him, and her voice—she sometimes spoke to him—was the most delightful that he had ever heard.

"I wish Madeline had a voice like yours," he told her once, and when she had melted away, he closed his eyes with a sigh, and said to himself:

"Of course—that is just the sort of voice I always knew the moon would have."

As I have said, she—the mysterious young creature—always was there alone, although usually only a few minutes before the room had been quite full of people. It was decent of them to go away before she came, especially in the case of Madeline, who was the worst and most persistent of them all.



*Then, clutching her by the hand to keep her from getting away from him, he continued:
"Tell me—where do you come from?"*

Madeline, I may remark, was his fiancée. She was entirely too attentive, he thought; she was there pretty much all the time. Any time he looked up, he would see her sitting close by, staring at him in a sort of uneasy way that got on his nerves. It was the greatest relief imaginable when she withdrew with the rest, and left him to enjoy, undisturbed, the quieting effect of the other's visit.

One day he asked his regular nurse about her—not Madeline; the—the other one.

"Who is she?" he inquired.

"Who is who?" returned Miss Daly—that was her name, he had learned.

"She, of course! There isn't but one."

He was irritated at her stupidity.

"I'm sure I don't know what you're talking about. Who do you mean?"

Suddenly he had a brilliant thought. He motioned her closer.

"I mean the moon lady," he whispered.

"The which? Oh, dear, he's gone again!"

Nesbit felt his face flush.

"I'm not gone," he denied aggressively.

ly. "I may have been out of my head a trifle now and then—I say I *may* have been—but I know perfectly well what I'm talking about now. She comes every night, I tell you. I wake up and she's here, leaning over me. She has light hair, and—"

"Oh, you mean Miss Clifford, the night nurse, of course!"

"Miss Clifford?"

He said it over to himself a great many times, so as not to forget it, and he was still repeating it—"Clifford—Clifford—Clifford"—under his breath when Madeline came again.

She entered with the stealthy step that always annoyed him for two reasons—first, because it offered the uncomfortable suggestion that he was a very sick person—which of course was absurd—and, second, because it was unnatural of Madeline to walk that way or to be affectedly quiet about anything. If she would stride up with her usual free step and say: "How are you, old sport?" in a hearty voice, he wouldn't mind it so much.

This morning it was violets that she had brought, and when Miss Daly took them out of the room to put them in water, Nesbit decided to speak about something that had been on his mind for some time.

"Madeline," he began resolutely, fixing his eyes on her face.

She started and blushed. She had been sitting on the edge of the straight-backed chair, twiddling her gloves nervously, and looking as if she didn't know what to do or to say. The blush would have been becoming if it had not been for the black lace veil that made scars upon her face.

"I see you know what I'm going to accuse you of," continued Nesbit good-humoredly.

Madeline looked positively frightened. She dropped her gold mesh bag with a clatter, and, when she had recovered it, moistened her lips and—he thought—avoided his gaze.

"Oh, there's nothing to get upset about," he went on. "It's just this matter of your visits to me here. Once a day is quite enough for you to come,

my dear girl. I know it's very sweet and thoughtful of you, and I'm sure I'm extremely grateful; but I don't like your sitting up night after night like this, you know. Think of the sleep you're losing."

Her mouth dropped open, and she stared at him in a very good imitation of blank astonishment. She didn't look scared any more—only surprised.

"Why, Fred, I haven't been here at night a single time," she insisted. "Really, I haven't. You're mistaken."

Nesbit laughed.

"Mistaken? Oh, that will hardly wash, you know. Don't bother to deny it. I'm not angry. Only when you stayed so late again last night I made up my mind to insist upon your not doing it again."

"But—"

Her lips were still parted, and her eyes wide with amazement or duplicity, it would have been hard to tell which if he hadn't known.

"Miss Daly," said Madeline to the nurse, who now entered with the violets, "tell Mr. Nesbit that I haven't been here at night. He believes I have."

"Oh, foolishness!" answered Miss Daly easily. "My dear man, you were delirious—that's all."

Nesbit eyed her accusingly. How could a woman lie like that? But he had learned the futility of arguing with her, so he set his lips tight and said nothing. Presently he shut his eyes and breathed hard. That was to make Madeline think that he was asleep, so that she would go.

He didn't know why it was that Madeline irritated him so these days. He had always had the greatest admiration for her, had thought that he was very fond of her indeed. The family all approved of their engagement, and he did himself. He had known her always, and she was a fine girl; clean-cut, honest—up till now, that is—played a beautiful game of golf, danced awfully well for a big girl, and would preside charmingly at a dinner table.

What was the trouble now? It must be nerves. He'd be all right when he

was about once more. But in the meantime he didn't want to say anything he'd be sorry for afterward, so the best plan was not to see any more of her than was absolutely necessary.

After a while, to his intense relief, she went. She tiptoed out, having first assured herself that he was asleep, but outside the door she stopped and held a little whispered confab with the nurse.

"When do you think I'd better tell him?" he heard her say.

Oh! So she had been coming at night all along, only she thought that he didn't know.

"Oh, not till he's strong enough to stand the shock. Wait till you see him after he leaves here. I would."

"Oh, dear, it's on my mind terribly! It will break his heart! Oh, why did I—"

What was the matter with her? She sounded really distressed.

"You're sure you haven't told any one? Not even the other nurses?"

"Not a soul," said Miss Daly.

"Poor fellow!" Madeline murmured in a choking voice, and she went away.

"Poor fellow," indeed! So they thought that he was going to peg out. Boneheads, all of them! But he'd show them! He'd tell the doctor what he thought about the matter.

"Doctor," he said, as soon as that person appeared for his morning visit, "you people around here think I'm not good for much, but I just want to tell you you never were more mistaken in your lives. Do you want to put a bet on it? I'm prepared to bet you any amount you say that you'll never crate me home in a silver-handled box. What do you say?"

"Why, that's the stuff! Keep to it! Certainly you're going to get well."

Suddenly he thought that he would mention the amount of company that he was having, and see if the crowd couldn't be kept away.

"As for Madeline—Miss Adkins," he told him in confidence, "don't you think you could suggest her staying away altogether for a while, and do it without hurting her feelings?"

He felt like a brute, but he couldn't help saying it. The doctor promised to see to the matter, and stuck to his word, which showed the advantage of taking one's complaints to headquarters. He didn't see Madeline all the rest of the day or the night following.

With this off his mind, he slipped down from a sort of soft cliff with no edges to it, and had a beautiful time drifting around in the depths for what seemed a long while. In fact, he knew nothing of any consequence whatever until the middle of the night, when, as always, he woke up to find the night nurse there, one soft hand raising his head a little, and the other getting ready to give him a capsule. Nothing was ever so delicious as that capsule, except the sight of the person who administered it, and the touch of her cool hands and the faint odor of her garments—it wasn't perfume—all of which were infinitely more delightful. The dim light, as usual, shone through the pale-golden mist of her hair, and her delicate features were only vaguely visible, like a reflection in a shadowed pool. Before he yielded to the spell that her coming always put upon him, he roused himself determinedly and spoke to her.

"How do you do, Miss Clifford?" he said gayly.

She blushed. He could see the blush even in the half light, and it was a different sort of blush from Madeline's, oddly enough—oh, very different!

"How do you do, Mr.—Nesbit?" she returned, evidently hesitating in quest of his name.

"Very well, thank you, now that you're here again," he told her.

Then, clutching her by the hand to keep her from getting away from him, he continued:

"Tell me—where do you come from?"

"Canada," she answered, smiling.

"That isn't what I mean. What puzzles me is how you get in here? For a while I was pretty sure that I dreamed you, and I couldn't get it out of my head that you didn't float in through



"Thirty-second Street, East," he shouted.

the window, or that you weren't made out of moonlight. You get me, don't you?"

"Perfectly," she answered him in her lovely voice.

"I might have known she had more sense than the others," he told himself.

"I come in the regular way, through the door there," she explained. "But you're always asleep, you see, and you

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never wake up till I touch you on the —on the shoulder."

Suddenly Nesbit shot a suspicious glance at her as a thought that was half a fantasy came to him.

"On the shoulder? Are you sure it's the shoulder?"

She was trying to get away, but he had her tightly by the hand.

"Certainly."

"Always?"

"Of course!"

He gave it up, but he was not entirely satisfied. With his free hand he touched a spot on his forehead meditatively.

"*She's* always gone when you come, isn't she? Madeline, I mean."

She hesitated the fraction of a second.

"Oh, yes, indeed! *She's* never here when I come."

"Then it's all right," he muttered.

That was all just then. The next thing he knew, the daylight was shining on the greenish-gray walls, and Miss Daly was setting down a tray of food on the stand beside him. She frowned when she took his temperature.

"I can't understand it," he heard her say to the doctor a little later.

He attached no meaning to her words. Nothing that she ever said interested him in the slightest. Besides, he was busy with a new and unpleasant sensation which had been his first discovery when he woke up, a sensation best described as the business of climbing.

He had a long distance to climb, and his legs were terribly tired—they ached awfully. And whenever he was nearly to the top of whatever he was trying to reach, the top of something like a thick veil would close over his eyes and nostrils so that breathing was impossible, and he would choke and stifle. He wished that he didn't have to climb up that detestable place. He didn't like climbing, anyway, and would much rather have stayed where he was, only he couldn't. It was dull and dreary and excessively stupid. He was glad when at last he was too tired to climb any more, and slid off the cliff again.

Just as he was going over, he heard the doctor say:

"Can he possibly have anything on his mind?"

"How can he have?" retorted Miss Daly. "He hasn't seen any papers."

What they were talking about, of course, he didn't know, and he didn't care. It was a piece of the unmeaning stuff that the two were always driv-

ing on about when they thought he couldn't hear. He wasn't able to stir up any excitement over it.

After a long time—a week or a month or an hour—he woke up feeling rested and refreshed, and keenly interested in a piece of intelligence that had just come to him—a thing that he felt he must impart to some one, so he called Miss Daly.

"Miss Daly," he said, when she reached his side, "I don't suppose you have heard it, so I'd better tell you. I've known it only a little while myself. Prepare yourself for a shock. Madeline—Miss Adkins—is dead."

Miss Daly gasped.

"My dear boy, don't think so for a moment! She isn't dead at all. She was here this morning."

He shook his head.

"You needn't try to deceive me. She died in the night. I know all about it. It's a pity. She was a fine girl, and she could have made some man very happy. Not me. I don't mind telling you now that she never was the right person for me, but that was my fault, not hers. I wouldn't have you blame her for a minute. But never mind all that. I must think about getting ready for the funeral. What ought I to wear?"

Miss Daly stared at him with the stupidest expression! Positively the woman had no sense at all.

"I asked you because I thought you had had some experience in these matters," he went on, with great politeness. "I suppose black—a perfectly plain black suit with a black tie—is the proper thing. You might just send a man over for my clothes, don't you think? Attend to it as soon as you can, please."

She found her voice at last.

"You heartless man!" she said, in a curious tone. "I don't believe you're sorry at all. You act as if you were glad."

"Oh, no! You mustn't say that. I should certainly not put it as strongly as that. It's very sad—very sad indeed. She was a fine girl, I tell you, and it's dreadful to think of her being cut off in the flower of her youth like that.

She played one of the prettiest games of golf I ever saw. Bogey? Pooh! Bogey was nothing to her. I've seen her do that course in sixty-eight. Sixty-eight, mind you! Some score, what? But don't forget about the funeral. And order some roses, will you? American Beauties—about three dozen. White flowers are not in her line."

The details of the funeral were a little mixed. He remembered a large crowd of people—they filled the bedroom completely and spilled out into the hall—and a great many flowers, and some one singing "*Ach, du lieber Augustin*" with great expression, but a little too fast for the organ. Madeline looked quite splendid with her white satin dress disposed artistically around her in the long white velvet casket. They had put the black lace veil on her—with questionable taste, he thought—and she had on her large, sensible golf boots. But these things did not impress him strongly one way or the other.

What he was chiefly struck with was the marked cheerfulness of the occasion. It was the nicest funeral that he had ever attended. Every one there was in the best of spirits, and he himself was never happier or more kindly disposed toward all the world. Tranquillity descended and covered him like a shimmering garment, and during the long blank following, he was vaguely, but pleasantly, conscious of a feeling of settled peace.

He came awake to find the night nurse bending over him.

"Miss Clifford," he said earnestly, as soon as he had swallowed the capsule, "how soon after a man's fiancée's death do you consider it proper for him to get married?"

The night nurse opened her eyes wide, and stared at him. She had wonderful eyes. What color were they? They must be blue, but in this light they looked black. He noticed for the first time what a firm, though piquant, little chin she possessed.

"I don't want to be hasty," he added. "There's no necessity. But I can't help

thinking about it. Is six months long enough? Or does it have to be a year?"

Still she didn't answer him.

"Don't think I'm asking you this out of idle curiosity," he assured her. "I have a good reason. It concerns me very deeply. You see, I want to marry you. I——"

She would have escaped if he hadn't been clever enough to get hold of her hand again.

"I know it's presumptuous for any mere man to ask you such a thing," he continued rapidly. "But if a man hasn't his nerve with him, he'll never get anything he wants, will he? And that's how it is with me; you can understand it, with *your* intelligence. You see, you've no idea how I want you. I've wanted you ever since I came here.

"You're the only girl I've ever felt this particular way about. Madeline was all right, and had many noble qualities, but I never was honestly in love with her—between ourselves. It was all so tame and deadly regular. Our fathers were partners in the coal business, and it seemed a good thing to keep the money together. But all the time, though I didn't care for any one else, I had a sneaking notion that I was getting cheated out of something that every person has a right to expect—a 'real, genuine love story,' as an old cook of ours used to say. Well, Madeline is dead, poor girl, and it's all going to turn out for the best; that is, if you'll have me. What do you say?"

The night nurse swallowed nervously and twisted her hand in his grasp.

"Say you will—please!"

He was growing more insistent. The heat was pulsing through his body in waves, and the hand that imprisoned hers burned like a coal.

"Well—perhaps—if you really want it," she said gently, with a little breathless stop between the words.

"Thank you!" he sighed, with deep relief, and then her hand melted from his hold, and he was off again over the cliff.

After that everything went more smoothly. There were fewer people in the room, less confusion, none of the



"Let me go! How dare— Kiss? What kiss? Of course it was a dream! Let me go, I say!"

old annoyance. Often he was in a reflective mood, looking back over his engagement with Madeline in a detached sort of way, as if it were some other person's affair.

"She was a good girl," he told Miss Daly every now and then, always with a little glow of self-appreciation, he felt so generous and noble.

Though it could not be said that he wished his late affianced back again, all his irritation toward her had vanished;

indeed, when he recalled the ease with which she used to get the golf ball out of a particularly beastly ditch, he grew almost sentimental. But all that was in the past. The future was the thing. The future contained Miss Clifford. As soon as his strength came back to him he would go out after her and make her marry him.

Would she? But she'd have to! Sometimes he had thought—he had thought that she—but of course *that*

was a dream. Still, in all his life he had never experienced an ecstasy that equaled the thing that he had dreamed of. Every time it recurred to him in fancy, a thrill swept all over him, even unto the uttermost corners of his being, and straightway afterward he felt himself floating high up in the air, with no weight to his body at all.

One day the rapturous wanderings ended, and he tied up, reluctantly enough, at the sober port of reality. He recognized his landing place by sundry twinges of his conscience. How could he have been such a brute, even in his delirium?

"Madeline must never know," he thought shamefacedly.

The dear girl had come every day to inquire, they told him; only, after he had shown such a dislike to her visits, she hadn't ventured inside the room again.

Another thing bothered him. He had an indistinct suspicion that he ought to ask the little night nurse's pardon for something that he had said to her, though what the something was he could not recall. Cowardlike, he put the matter off until the very eve of departure, when, the light turned low, he lay watching restlessly for her coming. Beside him on a chair hung the clothes that he was to put on to-morrow to go out into the jangling streets again—insufficient armor against a volley of actualities. What a bore it was—living!

He woke with a start. There she was, leaning over him, the light glowing softly through her hair. She had a little bunch of pansies tucked into the bosom of her pale-gray frock.

"Miss Clifford," he began at once, "I—I have something on my mind. I'm going away to-morrow, and I may not have another chance to speak to you about it. I want to know if I've said anything to you while I was out of my head that I—er—oughtn't to have said?"

She smiled, and met his gaze squarely.

"Why, no; indeed you haven't."

"You're sure you're not saying that to make me comfortable?"

"Quite sure! Don't give it another thought."

He sighed. So it was all right. And yet—no, it wasn't all right, either. It was all wrong. He was vaguely unhappy. What on earth was the matter with him? Was he never going to brace up and have any backbone again?

"So you're going?" she said to him. "I'm sorry."

"So'm I. I don't want to go. I hate it! I——" He paused, then brought it out impulsively: "Miss Clifford, I know I'm a baby, but don't leave me just yet! Stay with me till I go to sleep. It's the last chance I'll have to be a baby for a long time to come. Will you?"

"Why, of course I will."

She sat down on the edge of the bed, and smoothed his close-cropped head with her cool fingers. The last thing he knew was his hand closing on something velvety, that gave out a delicate odor; it felt like a flower. At the same time something brushed his forehead.

Nesbit banged the door of his fiancée's house, and dove into the waiting taxi.

"Thirty-second Street, East," he shouted.

His heart was pounding wildly. His head felt light, as it had when he was sick, and the blood surged swiftly in every vein.

"She's a fine girl!" he said aloud, and with deep enthusiasm. "Madeline's a great girl! I never cared for her half so much as I do at this moment!"

He snapped his fingers with nervous exhilaration, and drew big breaths of the sharp spring air. Oh, it was bully to be alive again! It was worth while just to be a part of the current of things—it was—

"Here you are, driver!"

The taxi veered to a standstill, and Nesbit tumbled out and into the lobby opposite without waiting for his change. The cross-looking woman behind the desk took him in from head to foot.

"Miss Clifford? The nurse, you

mean? I'll find out if you can see her."

As he paced back and forth in the dignified reception room, his excitement ebbed away from him, and with it vanished all the mad assurance that had brought him hither straight as a die. What would she think of him? How could he put it to her? It was—yes, it was altogether improper and daring. Suppose she—

"Mr. Nesbit?"

He started like a criminal. Yet the embarrassment was all on his side. The young person in the gray uniform and the crisp white apron extended to him a hand that did not falter, and looked up at him with eyes of a cloudless blue.

"You came back very soon, didn't you?"

Behind the curtain of her evident reserve, he fancied that a smile was twinkling. He got the impression somehow that he was not the first of her patients to put in an appearance thus early after recovery, and sharp jealousy stung him, adding immeasurably to his discomfort.

"I had to come. You know why. I couldn't have stayed away any longer. I—"

He halted helplessly. More and more what he had purposed to say to her seemed insane and shocking. She would probably hate him henceforth and forever. Girls were like that—certainly blond, fragile creatures with low-pitched voices. And yet—

"Will you go to dinner with me?" he blurted.

It was not at all what he had meant to say.

Smiling, she shook her head.

"I'm on duty," she said.

"Oh, damn! Excuse me. But when—er—that is—er—when can I—"

She let him flounder for a moment before she took pity on him.

"When can you see me again? Well, I have Thursday afternoon."

Thursday! Torture of waiting! And this was only Tuesday.

"Thursday afternoon? Right-o! We'll—we'll do anything you say."

He was sick with the deadly conventionality of it, plagued by the sense of opportunity slipping through his fingers. Merely playing for time, he thrust his hand into his pocket for his engagement book.

"I'll just put that down," he murmured asininely. As if he'd be likely to forget!

His hand closed on something small and of elusive texture. He drew it out wonderingly and looked at it. Then slowly he looked at her. What he held was a withered pansy.

With a curious expression, he rubbed his forehead, as he had done on a previous occasion, still keeping his eyes on his companion, who, for some odd reason, had flushed a sudden rose color, and was looking over her shoulder toward the door.

"See here!" cried Nesbit abruptly.

She edged away from him, and the action releasing some hidden spring, his arms went around her with swift audacity. She struggled like a frightened bird.

"Don't! Oh, what's the use of a lot of silly formalities? It wasn't a dream, anyway, was it? The kiss, I mean. Own up!"

"Let me go! How dare— Kiss? What kiss? Which kiss? What are you talking about? Of course it was a dream! Let me go, I say!" Then, with a burst of scorching contempt that made him quail for an instant: "You're—you're a shining example of an engaged man, *you* are!"

Her voice shook.

"Engaged? Me engaged? You're entirely mistaken! I'm as free as you are! I'm as free as air! I'm—"

She stared up at him in bewilderment.

"Why?" she gasped, in a faint tone.

He laughed triumphantly and hugged her closer.

"Because, the day that I was taken sick—before she knew anything about it, of course—Madeline ran away and married my best friend."

Hannah's Great Heart

by Temple Bailey

Author of "The Craftiness of Aunt Carrie," "Simonetta," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY J. HENRY

THE morning mail brought two letters. When Mrs. Hooper had read hers, she called her gaunt maid from the kitchen.

"Philip doesn't seem to think he's any better, Hannah."

Hannah regarded her with smoldering eyes.

"I had a letter from him, too, about sending the apples. He says his cough tires him, and that he's about ready to give up."

"I've had a cough all my life and I've never given up."

Hannah sat down on the edge of a chair. It was one of her privileges—to sit down—in this household of two, where mistress and maid were knit by close ties.

"Your cough," she said, with a certain air of defiance, "ain't ever interfered with your work."

"That's because I haven't allowed it to interfere. I wish Philip had my spirit."

Hannah rested a fascinated gaze on the pale countenance of the little lady in the big chair. Mrs. Hooper wore her front hair in the curled fringe fashion of twenty years ago; drawn straight up at the sides, it added an almost superfluous touch of refinement to her clear-cut features.

"If Philip had my spirit," Mrs. Hooper resumed, "he would never give up. His father always said that I was a wonder, delicate and fine, but strong to endure."

"Philip never had the chance he ought," doggedly. "You and Mr.

Hooper were so wrapped up in each other——"

"I was always my husband's sweetheart." Mrs. Hooper's eyes went to the great portrait over the fireplace. "It did seem as if he felt that Philip was in the way—but I have always been a good mother."

Hannah rose and stood looking down at the complacent little lady. Her eyes were flaming, but she shut her lips tightly. Without a word, she marched back to the kitchen.

There she packed a box of apples, and in the box she put another one of cookies. There were also three glasses of jelly, and some mincemeat.

"Don't say anything about these to your mother," she scrawled on the bit of paper that she put into the box. "She didn't pay for them, and she didn't make them."

At noon, Hannah carried a tray to Mrs. Hooper. There was an omelet on the tray, some toast, and a fruit salad.

Mrs. Hooper sighed as the tray was set before her.

"I thought maybe you'd scallop some oysters," she said. "I saw the fish man."

"I didn't have time," said Hannah briefly. "I was getting the apples off to Philip."

Again Mrs. Hooper sighed.

"You know my husband never thought that I could be put off for anybody else——"

"If you'll tell me what you want for dinner," was Hannah's dry response, "I'll get it."



To-night, as it was Christmas Eve, the callers brought offerings; and presently the dim room was gay with the scarlet and green of the festive season.

Mrs. Hooper considered.

"Do you think you could broil me a chicken, and have some potatoes with buttered parsley, and one of your whipped-cream cakes?"

"Why don't you ask Hester over," Hannah suggested, "to help you eat the chicken? She's dead sick of cooking for herself."

"Oh, not to-night, Hannah." The little lady shivered with apprehension. "She'd stay all the evening, and I have that new book from the library."

After lunch Mrs. Hooper had her

nap, but Hannah was busy. There was the cake to make, and the trip to the store to buy the chicken.

On the way back she met Hester Bray. Hester was young and pretty, and a second cousin of Mrs. Hooper's. She taught in the third grade of the public school, and roomed, and got her own meals.

"Oh, Hannah," she said joyfully, as she came up to the tall, old woman, "I've been buying Christmas presents, and I want you to see what I've got for Philip's kiddies."

"You come home with me," said Hannah, "and I'll make us a cup of tea. Mrs. Hooper's taking her nap, and reading her new book. I made some cookies to put in Philip's box, and there's some left over."

In the big kitchen, Hester opened her packages.

"They aren't very wonderful," she apologized, "but they are sweet and pretty, and I bought this for Annie."

Hannah gazed admiringly at the gift for Philip's wife.

"There's nothing you could give her that she'd like better than those correspondence cards. I heard her say the last time she was here that she never had any good note paper—"

"It's a shame," said Hester, "that she doesn't have all the dainty things she wants. She's so dear and unselfish."

Hannah sat down suddenly in the hard kitchen chair.

"The thing that is happening in this house," she said solemnly, "is the most awful thing in the world."

"Why, Hannah!"

"It is," repeated the old woman, and without warning she began to sob hard, dry sobs, wrung from an anguished heart.

"Why, Hannah!" said the girl again. "What in the world is the matter?"

"It's their Christmas," explained the old woman. "Philip's, and Miss Annie's, and the twins. There isn't any reason in the world why they shouldn't come here, and let me cook the dinner for them, and have a tree, and have all the things they need, the things they are longing for—the things they are dying for—"

"Hannah!"

"It's true," said the old woman wildly. "Don't you suppose I know? And she can't see it? She's so wrapped up in herself that she can't see it. It ain't all her fault, for her husband made her that way. He gave her things, and waited on her, and made everybody else wait on her. He thought she was the loveliest, and the sweetest, and the unselfishest woman in the world, and all the time she was being spoiled for everybody else. And poor little Philip

grew up, waiting on her, and helping his father to spoil her, and then when he married, his mother was jealous because she knew that she wouldn't be first with him, and Mr. Hooper didn't like it because his wife didn't, and when Mr. Hooper died he left all the money so Philip couldn't touch a cent till his mother died. And she ain't ever felt the need of anything. She ain't ever denied herself anything. She doesn't see that they're half starved with his teacher's salary and the big bills after his sickness, and that if this cough keeps up, and he doesn't have a change, he's going to die—and—"

"Did Annie tell you?" asked Hester gently.

"Some of it she let out, and some of it I saw. But Philip won't breathe a word against her. I don't believe he thinks anything against her. But I do. Philip's like my own child. I mothered him and fathered him while they were playing sweethearts, and if he dies, I shall feel as if she has murdered him."

The girl looked at the sobbing old woman with shocked eyes.

"Oh, Hannah, she doesn't mean it!"

"Does that make it any better?" demanded Hannah fiercely. "Haven't men shot other men, and hit them in the head, and they haven't really meant to murder them, but the law called it murder. And when she knows that the money that's lying idle in the bank would save his life, what would you call her if she doesn't give it, and he dies?"

"Has he asked her to help?"

"No, and he won't. And Annie won't. Annie's proud, and she has always felt that they might think she married him for his money."

"But I don't see—"

"Of course you don't. You don't know anything about a nature like hers. She thinks of what she's going to have for dinner, and what she's going to read, and whether the hot-water pipes are hot enough, and whether she needs an open fire, and whether she needs another trained crape dress, and whether her wristbands and her neckbands are done up properly. And that's what I do all day—look after such fiddling little



"Suppose," whispered the grim, old voice, "suppose he could come back to you—how would you welcome him?"

things, when I'd be glad to be doing big house work for Philip, and the babies, and Miss Annie. I'd go there if they'd let me, but they won't have me leave her——"

"You wouldn't leave her, Hannah; you know you wouldn't."

The troubled old eyes considered the possibility.

"She needs me, and they need me—but they need me most. I'm just aching to give them a Christmas. Here you are spending your little bit that you've earned yourself on dolls for the babies, and cards for Annie, and you're giving because you love to give, and because you couldn't be happy if you didn't. And what is she doing? She's sent each of the children a dollar bill, and Annie six handkerchiefs, and Philip a tie, and she let me send off a box of apples when she ought to have sent a barrel, and there wasn't a Christmassy thing in that box—not a bit of ribbon, or holly, or greens, nothing except some cookies that I tied up in red tissue paper, and some jelly and some mince-meat that I paid for out of my own pocket."

"Well, she's missing a lot," said Hester. "But somehow I can't think of her as selfish. She has such a dear way with her."

Hannah got up and poured boiling water over the tea leaves before she answered.

"It's her dear way that's deceived the world all these years," she said. "And it ain't only the world that's deceived, it's herself."

When Hester was gone, Hannah went up and helped Mrs. Hooper dress. There were always old friends who dropped in on certain days before dinner, paying to the mistress of the big, old-fashioned mansion the delicate homage that fed her vanity, and compensated in some slight degree for the masculine adoration that she missed.

For these ceremonies, she wore trailing mourning garments, and made a regal little figure, as she sat in a high-backed, carved chair on one side of the great fireplace in the library.

To-night, as it was Christmas Eve,

the callers brought offerings; a great bunch of red roses from her husband's junior partner, a wreath of holly and a bunch of mistletoe, a potted poinsettia, until presently the dim room was gay with the scarlet and green of the festive season.

Later, amid the lonely shadows, Mrs. Hooper wept.

"I miss him, Hannah, I miss my husband. It will be my first Christmas without him!"

Hannah, standing stiffly in the middle of the floor, with the dinner tray in her hands, said:

"Why didn't you have Philip and Annie come to-morrow? It would have cheered you up."

"It would have jarred on my mood," said the little lady. "I would rather be alone with my grief."

But presently she sat up and ate her broiled chicken, and the potatoes with parsley, and half of the whipped-cream cake; and when the Christmas bells rang out the gladdest tidings of the year, she lay propped among the pillows of her big bed, reading the latest novel from the library.

And downstairs in the silent kitchen Hannah reread the letter that had come to her by the last mail, from Philip's wife.

Can't you find some way to ask her to help us, Hannah? Philip is broken by the struggle. And he is longing for the South, and the soft air, and the smell of the pines, and the rest and the out-of-doors, and the freedom from the grind of teaching. Yet he won't ask mother for a penny, and he has made me promise that I won't ask her. Yet I can't see him die. Oh, Hannah, dear, what shall I do?

When Hannah went up to turn down the lights, she broke the peace of the dim apartment by her bald statement.

"Philip's awful sick, Annie wrote me this afternoon. The doctors think he ought to go South."

"Why didn't Annie write to me?" demanded the pale little creature among the pillows. "I don't see why she should send a letter to you, Hannah."

"Well," Hannah slurred the minor matter for the important one, "she's awfully worried about Philip."

Mrs. Hooper's hand fluttered the open pages of her book.

"Annie doesn't realize that Philip has his father's constitution. Is he in bed?"

"No—but people have died walking—"

"Died?" said Mrs. Hooper sharply. "Philip isn't as sick as that, Hannah."

"You ought to do something for him."

There was a dull color in the old woman's cheeks.

"If you mean that I ought to send him money," said Mrs. Hooper, "he hasn't asked for it. And if Philip should go South, where would Annie and the children stay?"

"I thought perhaps they might come here—"

Mrs. Hooper sat up. The fine laces of her gown fell away from her thin, white throat. Her silver hair stood out in a soft, curled halo. She looked very fragile, very appealing.

"How could I have them here?" she quavered. "I'm not well enough."

Hannah gazed at her hopelessly.

"I don't know as you are," she said at last, slowly. "I don't know as you'd live if you had to think of anybody besides yourself."

Mrs. Hooper's egotism took no offense.

"Mr. Hooper always thought of me first," she said, "and now that he's gone—I think you ought to, Hannah."

"But Philip," the old woman pursued relentlessly, "what about him?"

Mrs. Hooper sank down among her pillows.

"I shan't sleep a wink to-night," she sobbed. "You might have waited till morning to tell me about Annie's letter."

Suddenly, out of her impotent anger, the old woman spoke.

"If he dies, his blood will be on your head."

"Hannah, don't you think that I love my son, that I know what is best for him?"

"God knows. If you loved him, you'd help him."

"You are making a mountain out of a molehill," emphatically. "Philip is not ill enough for such controversy. And it's Christmas Eve. It is a time for good

will and peace, and, oh, Hannah, you and I have lived together all these years! We mustn't fall out now, Hannah."

Hannah gazed at her mistress, at the tender little face, softened now with pink color, at the slight figure in the lace-trimmed gown, at the thin, white hands held out to her. To her slow, loving nature, there was only one thing that would make perfect the Christmas that must be spent under this roof, and that one thing had to do with a pale, young student in a distant town. What right otherwise had she and this pampered little creature to speak of peace and good will?

Yet she found herself taking the outstretched hands.

"You go to sleep," she said awkwardly.

"As if I could, after all you've said!" was the plaintive reproach that followed her as she went out of the door.

But at midnight, when Hannah crept up to the dim, shadowy room, she found the pale, little mother in deep slumber, and as the wakeful old woman viewed that peaceful unconsciousness, her face grew dark and determined.

All that night Hannah kept restless vigil in the old kitchen, and brooded over the dying fire.

Toward morning the bell rang, and she went to the door. Then she climbed again to the shadowy room.

"There's bad news," she said, as Mrs. Hooper waked slowly like a sleepy baby. "It's from Annie."

Light dawned in Mrs. Hooper's eyes.

"Is Philip worse?"

"It's more dreadful than that," said Hannah heavily. "It's the worst thing that could possibly be—"

"Oh, Hannah—he isn't—dead?"

Hannah nodded.

There was silence for a moment. Then a sharp cry:

"Oh, Hannah, what shall I do?"

"It isn't what you shall do now," said the old woman inexorably. "It's what you should have done."

"Oh, do you think I could have saved him, Hannah?"



At the door of the old house, Philip's mother waited for him.

"You know what I think," said Hannah. "What do you think?"

Only a moan answered her, and that brought Hannah to her knees beside the bed.

"I wish I could have made it easier for you," she wailed, "but it had to be this way! It had to be this way!"

And she rocked the weeping mother in her strong arms.

When at last Mrs. Hooper drew away from that shelter, she said:

"Go get Hester, Hannah. She can stay with me while you do the necessary things."

But there was no need to go for Hester, for they heard her voice calling:

"May I come up? It's awfully early, but I've been to morning service."

On the threshold of the big room the girl stopped short.

"What on earth's the matter?" she demanded.

"It's Philip," Hannah said, hesitating a little. "He's—dead—"

"Philip—why—he can't be—I—"

Hannah caught hold of the girl's arm. "Come downstairs," she commanded sternly. "Come down——"

With the kitchen door shut behind them, Hannah explained.

"It was the only way to save him. I've told her he's dead."

Hester shrank away from her.

"Oh, cruel!" she blazed. "How could you, Hannah?"

"I love him more than I love her," said the old woman fiercely. "If he comes now, she'll do anything in the world for him——"

"That's what I came to tell," said Hester. "Annie sent a special delivery this morning that Philip felt that he must see his mother on Christmas Day, and that they were coming."

"I had one, too," said Hannah, "but I knew it wouldn't do any good for them to come. She'd made up her mind, and they wouldn't ask—and so I told her—he was dead——"

"Well, I'm going right up and tell her

you've lied. Hannah, you haven't any right to act this way."

"It was the only way."

"I'm going up."

But the tall woman barred the door.

"You've got to leave it to me. I've begun it, and I'm going to finish it. You go and meet Philip at the station, and keep him back for a little if you can."

Protesting, the girl at last obeyed. Then Hannah went upstairs.

Mrs. Hooper sat in front of her desk, a drooping figure in her lavender dressing gown. On the desk was a picture of Philip as a little boy. She had another picture of him in her hand.

As Hannah came and stood by the desk, the mother held out her arms, with a broken cry:

"Oh, Hannah——"

Again the strong arms upheld her, and now the softened eyes looked down into hers.

"Suppose," whispered the grim, old voice, "suppose he could come back to you—how would you welcome him?"

The slender figure began to tremble.

"I'd show him how much I loved him, Hannah—how much I really loved him."

"Would you let me cook a turkey for him and have a tree?"

"I'd let you do anything." Then, as the realities again gripped her, she wailed: "How can you think of such things—when he'll never come back?"

"He'll come," said Hannah slowly, "if you bring him back."

"Hannah! What do you mean?"

"Nothing but love could bring him back. But love will. My dear, my dear, suppose I tell you that he isn't dead?"

"Hannah!"

"Suppose I tell you that when I found that nothing else would wake you up to know how awful it was to let him die without holding out a hand to save him—suppose I should tell you that to save you from this—suppose I should tell you that I—I lied——"

If she had expected to see the other draw back, as Hester had drawn back, in aversion, if she had steadied herself to meet reproach, if she had steelled herself to endure scorn, she had none of

these things to bear, for Philip's mother clung to her, and laughed a little, and cried a great deal, and said, over and over again:

"Oh, Hannah, Hannah, thank God, thank God!"

When she had quieted her, Hannah went down to the telephone. She called up the butcher and the baker, and a farmer who lived a few miles from the town. Her orders were peremptory. There must be a turkey forthcoming, and certain cakes, and a tree. The rest she could do herself.

An hour later Philip's train arrived. Hester, at the station, had heard from Hannah. She had been instructed to interview the ticket agent, and to bring folders and time cards. And she had responded to the commands of the eager voice at the other end of the telephone.

A hired motor car waited for Philip and his family at the station, and whisked them home through the snowy streets. It was the twins' first ride in a car, and they were blissfully silent. But Annie asked questions.

"How did it happen that mother sent it, or is this your treat, Hester?"

"I rather think it's Hannah's treat," Hester said. "Oh, she is a good woman, Annie!"

At the door of the old house, Philip's mother waited for him. And she not only waited, but she ran forward to meet him, regardless of the snow and of her black satin slippers, and of her trailing gown.

"My boy!" she whispered, when she came up to him, and she laid her face against his shabby coat, and held him as if she could never let him go.

He brooded over her, loving her, as he had loved her all his adoring little-boy days.

"Why, mumsie," he kept saying, "are you as glad as that to see me?"

When at last she released him, she put her hands on the shoulders of the little wife.

"Oh, Annie, dear Annie, we must help him to get well," she said, and kissed her.

The twins had already gone on to Hannah, hungry-hearted Hannah,

whose stern face, as she watched the scene outside, was wet with the tears that she was too proud to wipe away.

Perhaps only the little wife guessed what was in the great, old heart.

"Dear Hannah," she said, when Philip had greeted the tall, gaunt woman affectionately, and had gone in with his mother, "dear Hannah, somehow I feel that you are at the bottom of it all."

Hannah set the twins down gently.

"You wait till you see the turkey I've got in the oven," she said, "and the ice cream I've made for the darlings, and the tree that you and Hester have got to get trimmed in three whisks. And you wait till you see the tickets that will take him South—and the folders with all the pictures of pines, and palms, and

big hotels—and he's going there to get well, and you are going with him—He's going, Annie—"

"But how in the world? How in the wide world did she come to do it, Hannah?"

Hannah looked through the door of the library to where Philip knelt beside his mother, who sat in the high, carved chair. Her hand was on his head, and his thin, white face was transfigured by a look that matched the radiance of the thin, white face above him.

"I guess it was because she loved him," said Hannah slowly. "And now, if you don't mind, you run along and help Hester trim the tree, and I'll take the twins out to the kitchen with me and let them look at the turkey, Annie."



Until the Day Break

REST, wistful heart, the morning brings no duty.
Sleep; all your earthly tasks are laid aside.
Dear, anxious spirit, garner all the beauty
That you have sown so patiently, my bride.

Good night, dear love, turn your sweet face toward me
For one long, gentle, tender, last farewell.
Stroke my pale cheek as you were wont; reward me
Only for loving past the power to tell.

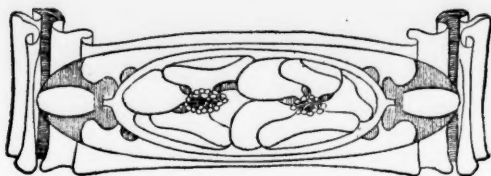
Oh, holy light, enriching life's gray sadness,
Oh, constant truth, surviving change and strife,
Oh, patient faith that reached through grief to gladness,
Oh, fragrant essence of eternal life,

Stay by me through my night, oh, tender-hearted.
Fold my faint faith in knowledge gained above.
Help me to know that we were never parted;
That only doubt is dead; that God is love.

That God is love; link of our lives, all kindness;
That Love is God; God's consciousness, God's breath.
Breathe sweetly o'er my soul, to heal my blindness,
That wiser consciousness you won from death.

Sweet spirit, it is I who wander, weakly,
Stripped of my pride, encompassed in a sigh.
But your dear voice comes as I kneel here, meekly,
"I said 'good night!' beloved, not 'good-by!'"

GEORGE FOXHALL.



Angel Unawares

By Marie de Montalvo

Author of "The Little Person," "The Back Number," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN A. BAZANT

MISS LUCY, sitting at the window in her best silk gown, watched the tall, young stranger all the way up the shaded street. She was sure that it was Tom Maitland's son coming to call, as his father—whom she had not seen in thirty years—had written he would on his way to New York from San Francisco. But it seemed odd, as she watched him, that he should have to stop at more than one house to ask the way. Surely any one on the street ought to have been able to direct him to the residence of Miss Lucinda Bayles!

Would it be suitable for her to step out on the veranda and call to him before he had time to ring another bell? "Suitable" was Miss Lucinda's favorite word. It might look undignified, she reflected; particularly if this should prove to be not Tom Maitland's son, after all.

She tried to remember what the father had looked like when she had refused him, and he had started West in desperation many years before. She had thought, in those days, that there would be many other suitors for her hand; among them one at least more handsome and brilliant than her honest, kind-hearted, unpretentious old playmate, who would carry her away by the fervor and the romance of his wooing. But this one had never come,

and the years had been lonely waiting for him. Now it was too late.

Miss Lucy sighed a little as the tall figure advanced along the street. She thought she could detect a resemblance to his father in the way he held his head, and sighed again.

He had rung the bell of the house across the street now, and was making inquiries of Mrs. Giles' maid, who would direct him to her at once, of course. Miss Lucy's heart fluttered a little with pleasant anticipation. It was a long time since she had served afternoon tea to a masculine visitor, and the things were all ready in the kitchen. She hoped he would like them.

She leaned forward eagerly at the window and was horrified to see Mrs. Giles' maid shake her head vigorously, and slam the door in the young man's face. He turned away, dejected.

Miss Lucy sprang from her chair in indignation. She would speak to her neighbor about that insolent maid! And without another thought for her dignity, she opened the front door and went quickly down the path with hands outstretched to greet him just as the stranger reached her gate.

"I am so sorry that maid was rude to you!" she exclaimed, with pretty impulsiveness. "I can't apologize enough! But I'm glad you found the house at



"I am so sorry that maid was rude to you!" she exclaimed, with pretty impulsiveness.

last. I've watched you all the way up the street."

An expression of unspeakable astonishment crossed the weariness of the

stranger's face as, removing his hat, he took her extended hand and followed her to the house.

"You are surprised," said Miss Lucy

graciously, "to find that I knew you were coming. I have been watching all afternoon, because I knew it would be your only day in Croylston."

"You are very good——" said the stranger.

They entered the house and sat down, and the young man began to fumble in the pocket of the light spring overcoat he wore, while Miss Lucy shyly searched his features for traces of his father. Now that he was here, she hardly knew what to do with him, and he, too, seemed a little awkward. Then Miss Lucy had an inspiration. She remembered the axiom that young men are always hungry, and rose to her feet again.

"Take off your overcoat," she suggested cordially. "I am going to leave you for a moment—just a moment," reassuringly.

She left the room before he had a chance to reply.

"He will feel perfectly at ease by the time I get back," she thought; and while she darted about the kitchen, she thought of the inquiries her neighbors would make about her handsome guest.

"The son of an old beau of mine," she could hear herself replying, her eyes demurely bent on the smooth lap of her best silk gown.

In a few minutes she was back in the little parlor with the well-filled tray in her hands. Her guest sprang from his chair to help her, dropping a book upon the floor, and the weariness fled from his face, and was replaced by an overwhelming, an abject, an almost doglike gratitude that puzzled Miss Lucy while it warmed her heart and dispelled the last vestige of her shyness.

"Why, Miss—Miss——" he stammered.

"Not Bayles," begged the little lady gently; "call me Miss Lucy. That's what everybody calls me."

"Miss Lucy, you are awfully good to me," with fervor.

What a nice boy he was!

"Not at all," she assured him. "You have had a tiresome journey. You've dropped your book on the floor," she added parenthetically.

He picked it up as she sat down beside the tea tray, and turned the leaves.

"This," said the young man, "is a very remarkable book, Miss Bayles."

"I'm sure it is," she agreed. "We shall find a great deal to talk about if you like books. Will you have tea, or raspberry wine? Young men are always hungry. And you look tired."

"I have had a pretty hard day," sighed the young man, sitting down with an air of relief and putting the book aside.

"Then here is something to refresh you. The raspberry is my very own recipe—the plum jam from my own back yard—and the biscuits just out of the oven!"

Urged by his generous hostess, the guest gratefully fell to and accomplished wonders—"I don't believe he's had a proper luncheon!" she thought pityingly—while she entertained him with gentle inquiries about his travels and the subjects of the day—on which Miss Lucy had been reading up—coming back by way of the servant problem to his rebuff from the maid across the street, which still disturbed her.

"I'm so sorry she was rude to you," said Miss Lucy again.

The visitor looked grateful.

"But I'm quite used to it," he murmured deprecatingly.

"Yes, isn't it terrible what one has to stand from servants in these days? Have you as much trouble in the West?"

The young man shook his head mournfully.

"It's just as bad in the West," he told her.

"I thought they had good Japanese. What does your mother do about it?" asked Miss Lucy. She felt a little shy of talking about his family.

Her guest looked surprised.

"Mother does all her own work," he replied.

Miss Lucy was filled with compunction. She had thought Tom Maitland well off financially, and had made a terrible break. Certain shiny places in the young man's garments that had been covered by his overcoat obtruded



"I wish every one were like you, Miss Lucy," said the young man ardently.

themselves upon her vision, and appealed to her sympathy.

"I don't blame her one bit," she returned with ready tact. "I do all the work in this house myself rather than harbor such a creature as that Irish maid of Mrs. Giles."

The young man shook his head.

"There's another side to it, though," he granted magnanimously. "They

must be kept continually running to the door by people who haven't any business there, like me."

"She hasn't the shadow of an excuse," retorted Miss Lucy, thinking of his shabby clothes. "A gentleman is a gentleman, no matter—no matter what he comes for! She should have answered you politely, and sent you here at once!"



"By Jove, if it isn't Tom Mailland!"

"I wish every one were like you, Miss Lucy," said the young man ardently.

"I wish now," continued Miss Lucy, "that I had gone out as I thought of doing when I first saw you, and avoided the unpleasantness. But it did not seem quite dignified to call to a gentleman all the way across the street—and I think if it had been any one except Tom Mailland's son come to see me I should have

died of embarrassment——" with emphasis.

The young man made a sudden movement and dropped his spoon upon the floor. Crimson, he bent down to recover it.

"I knew your father very well, years ago," she reminisced softly, covering his confusion; "and so you see his son is very welcome. He wrote me to expect you. Won't you have a biscuit?"

"Oh, I—thank you—I couldn't, Miss Bayles. If you only knew——"

"I know that your father has sat in this very parlor and eaten seventeen!" interrupted his hostess with dignity. "They are nothing." She heaped his plate again. "He wasn't ashamed. We counted them."

"I'm imposing on your hospitality," stammered the guest.

"Nonsense! Your father's son! Why, he was one of my very best beaux." She smiled and flushed daintily.

"You haven't told me—is he well?"

"Oh, very well."

The answer came with difficulty.

"And your mother?"

"Also well."

"I have always wanted to meet your mother," said Miss Lucy reflectively. "I was told she was very beautiful."

"She's the best mother that ever lived!" agreed the son with enthusiasm.

It seemed a subject he would be glad to talk upon. Miss Lucy, her tea serving over, leaned back comfortably in her little straight chair.

"Now you must tell me all about her—and your father—and the two dear little sisters—and—and everything. I am very much interested."

The young man hesitated. He glanced out of the window, and toward the door. Then he cleared his throat and started to speak, but caught Miss Lucy's look and hesitated again.

"I am so glad you *are* Tom Maitland," she said warmly. "I hoped you were when you were coming up the street. You might have been——" She paused, with a prim little gesture. "But I can see the resemblance now. Tom Maitland's son couldn't be——" Again the gesture.

The visitor lowered his eyes, hesitated again, then took out his watch, and looked at it despairingly. With an exclamation of dismay he sprang to his feet.

"My dear Miss Lucy! You must forgive me! It will seem hopelessly rude—I don't know how to apologize—but I have an important business engagement, and the next train for New York leaves in fifteen minutes."

His hostess did not conceal her disappointment.

"But I can't let you go," she protested, "just as we had begun to talk! And this is your only day in Croylston?"

"I'm afraid so——" regretfully.

"You haven't told me a thing about your family!" complained Miss Lucy. She rose, rather sadly. "Well—if you must go, I suppose I ought not to detain you."

"Tell your father—give him my kindest regards," she amended primly, "and tell him he has a son to be proud of."

The visitor took her hand gently.

"You don't know what it means to me to hear you say that," he said sincerely. "I was feeling—terribly discouraged—when I came here to-day. You will never know how much you have done for me. You have been lovely—and thank you."

He closed the door lingeringly, and started down the path. But in a moment he was back.

"Please—Miss Lucy——" He hesitated.

"Yes?"

"As a favor—please don't complain about the maid."

Miss Lucy's eyes grew moist.

"Ah—you *are* like your father! The kindest heart! I promise, my dear boy, gladly!"

She laid her hand affectionately on his arm, and then, impulsive, pink-cheeked, and shy, drew down his head and kissed him on the forehead.

The door closed once more behind him, and she turned back a little sadly into the empty house.

Miss Lucy's visitor wiped the perspiration from his face as he hurried to the railroad station. As he passed the dingy hotel beside the depot, a youth lurched through the disreputable group at the door and bumped against him.

"Shcuse me," he apologized thickly, holding on to the other to steady himself. "Can you tell me which direction——"

"No, I'm a stranger here myself," said the other shortly, trying to move away.

But the intoxicated youth held on.

"Demmed nuisance!" he proclaimed, swaying. "Counfound' demmed nuisance! Hic! Father-mush-be-obeyed. Hic! Inshist your telling me where Mish Lushinda Bailiff lives. Baylesh. Ole girl o' th' ole mansh." He laughed noisily. "Gotter go an' show her what a fine family the ole mansh raised, if she *did* throw him over thirty years ago. Hic!" He laughed again in maudlin appreciation of the joke. "I'm the family!"

Enlightenment dawned in the stranger's face, and an air of sudden decision. His grip fell heavily upon the youth's shoulder.

"By Jove, if it isn't Tom Maitland!" he exclaimed in a tone of jolly good-fellowship. The other stared dully. "Don't you remember me, Tom?" He

shook hands vigorously, propelling his companion the while toward the station, with a firm hand beneath his elbow. "You're not going to call on any maiden ladies this day, my boy! Not while I've got hold of you. You're coming on to New York with me, and we'll paint the town red. Won't we?"

They were on the platform now, and the train was just starting. The guard leaned down with the sympathetic desire to help always manifested in such cases—perhaps from a fellow feeling with the sufferer—and hoisted the pair aboard. They went into the smoking car.

"Tell you shumping," said the real Tom Maitland, with a tipsy wink, just before he relapsed into slumber. "Ole man better-not-know. Ole-man-mush-

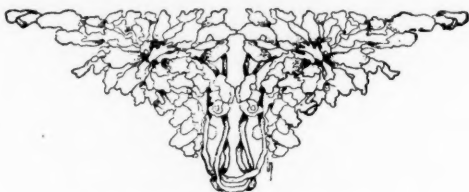
be-obeyed. Tell-'im-I-went-there. *You know!*" drowsily.

"He'll never know it wasn't you if I can help it," muttered the other grimly.

The trip from the ferry to the nearest decent hotel in the city was a lurid nightmare for the stranger. Tom had spent all of his money, or lost it playing poker on the Western trains, so he paid for a room and put the young man to bed, leaving a note of explanation for him to read in the morning.

Then, dinnerless, his pockets empty, he made his way back to his lodgings.

"But," said the stranger, as he lighted the gas in his room, "I'd do more than that for a lady who'd be as kind as she was—even unawares—to a book agent!" Then, anxiously: "Only I hope that maid doesn't give the game away."



The Fate of the Fir Tree

GLIMMER of melting frost; no snow;

The laugh of silver bells is whist;

A climbing golden sun aglow

Above reluctant blue-gray mist—

A winter day, but overflowed

By airs a waning March might praise,

And, humbled on a dustman's load,

A fir tree, jolting down the ways.

Sweet as with frankincense and myrrh,

Was it for this she spread her green,

Wood sheltered, till they necklaced her

With blinking lights and tinsel sheen?

Like any generous orchard tree

She gave her harvest—still to keep

In her dried boughs a spice to be

Long linked with holy things and deep:

The dazzled hills, the mumbling sheep,

And, in the awed eyes of the Three

Questing, a mightier King to greet,

The gleaming wonder of the star;

While up small Bethlehem's rocky street

The soft-shod camels toiled from far.

JEANNIE PENDLETON EWING.

The Treachery of Miggie Bean

By Anna Alice Chapin

Author of "The Under Trail," "The Heart of Music," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY E. C. CASWELL

MARGARET to Maggie, Maggie to Meggie, and Meggie to Miggie.

This one must suppose to have been the evolution of Miggie Bean's name, as known to her employers and associates. If, indeed, the term "evolution" can be applied to a process of such steady retrogression. Margaret is a beautiful and a stately name; it is distressing to think of its having been corrupted to the level of Miggie!

Yet the law of the fitness of things somehow prevails. You could not have called the freckle-faced, straggly-haired little kitchen girl Margaret without affronting the fair ghosts of dear dead ladies who once bore the name that means a pearl. Whereas Miggie—why, of divine right Miggie *was* Miggie, forever and ever, amen!

Miggie Bean was an orphan, and an ugly one—a little, sawed-off, pasty runt of a creature, Mrs. Crawley called her, not at all maliciously, but with the simple wish to be accurately descriptive. Miggie was a little, sawed-off, pasty sort of a creature, besides being an unclaimed, unplaced, and unwanted orphan, and Mrs. Crawley's kitchen maid.

Of course, the term kitchen maid had simply grown out of Mrs. Crawley's sudden increase in prosperity. Before she sold the South Meadow piece of land to the railway, and then successfully invested in a company that should have failed, and only by the grace of the God that looks after children and idiots, did not, Mrs. Crawley would have called Miggie "that orphan-asylum kid that comes in to help." With the advent of a few extra hundred dollars one morning, the family dictionary was

magically altered, and Mrs. Crawley's midday meal became lunch, just as Miggie Bean became her kitchen maid.

The orphan asylum in Colbourne was a primitive country institution, which perhaps explains its singular humanity and clemency in letting Miggie live on there after she was quite old enough to be fending for herself out in the big world.

Attractive orphans are snapped up quickly, but Miggie was not an attractive orphan, and no one had wanted her. She had been trained for service, but was such a little, frail, miserable thing that the kind-hearted matron did not like to send her adrift alone, even after she had reached the grown-up, wage-earning age of seventeen. So she lived on at the asylum, and went out to work by the day for the ladies of Colbourne, doing such work as the ruddy and well-fed housewives felt incapable of doing themselves.

And Miggie was happy. She sang while she scrubbed, and smiled to herself over the extra-heavy ironing. For she had a secret—a delectable, invigorating secret calculated to put life into you if you were ever so dead-beat. Miggie Bean was in love! And any one who has tried it knows what that means as stimulant, and sedative, and nourishment, all in one. It wasn't necessary for her to feel herself beloved; the exhilaration was in loving. Herein, you perceive, Miggie Bean had the great manner; she touched the stars.

The stout Mrs. Crawley commented on it to the thin Mrs. Baggs, as they rocked and worked together in the Crawleys' warm dining room on a glow-

ing winter afternoon. It would once have been in the kitchen—soon it would be in the front parlor—that Mrs. Crawley would receive her guests. At present, she was in an in-between stage; so she entertained them on neutral ground—the dining room.

"Miggie Bean," said Mrs. Crawley impressively, "has a young man!"

"Mercy me!" said Mrs. Baggs, opening a mild eye, and dropping a stitch—she was a lady who knitted. "What's the world coming to, I should like to know?"

"Only seventeen!" added Mrs. Crawley, shaking her large, foolish head, and she did not know that her reproachful words had once been the text of the most immortal of all pleas in court. "Sirs, only seventeen!" But how should Mrs. Crawley have acquaintance with Capponsacchi, the soldier priest? And what had Miggie Bean in common with Pompilia, except her innocent heart?

The undiscerning women vaguely felt that innocence and touched on it carelessly, but justly.

"She means well," said Mrs. Baggs in tolerant fashion. "I guess Miggie Bean always means well."

"Oh, I'd trust her, as far as that goes." Mrs. Crawley smoothed out her wool. "But then, seventeen, Mrs. Baggs, is too young to have a young man!"

"I—I wasn't but eighteen when—" began mild Mrs. Baggs.

"I was twenty-eight," interrupted Mrs. Crawley sternly, in a way that disposed of the matter. Mrs. Baggs felt crestfallen and unaccountably abashed. Perhaps it was more modest to wait until you were twenty-eight.

With an effort at recovering her dignity, she asked hurriedly who the young man was.

"It's Sam Gibbs, who works for the cider-mill people. A good fellow, but wild. At least," corrected Mrs. Crawley, "he *looks* wild. And, of course, his trade is against him."

"Well—cider is a very righteous drink," protested Mrs. Baggs timidly.

"I have always held," said Mrs.

Crawley, who weighed two hundred, and was austere, "that it opens the way to worse things!"

In the kitchen, Miggie Bean's voice was raised in a hymn of praise:

"When shepherds watched their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground——"

"Ain't that a Christmas carol," asked Mrs. Baggs softly.

Mrs. Crawley nodded.

"It's real pretty," said the visitor.

"Yes, it is," said the hostess. After they had listened a moment, she added: "Miggie is going to sing in the Orphan Asylum Christmas Choir Association, on the twenty-fourth. At least, she is if she gets in. She don't know yet that she can."

"It seems like I can't realize how close Christmas is." Little Mrs. Baggs sighed helplessly. "Every year I think that I am going to prepare for it ahead, and some way I never get to it."

"I've got my daughter and her husband coming," said Mrs. Crawley, "but outside of that I don't know as I'll have things much different. Except food and things. Course, I always have *that* right!"

And Mrs. Crawley, who prided herself on her cooking, tossed her head.

Mrs. Baggs glanced at her, flushing slightly, and then said, in a hurried, wistful sort of way:

"I—I'm chairwoman of the Church Improvement Committee this year, and it's my turn to per—to pre—to pre—side," faltered Mrs. Baggs, who was unused to the word, "at the Christmas supper. They want I should do the plum pudding. I said"—she hesitated—"I said that no one in Colbourne could make plum pudding along with you, Mis' Crawley."

She paused, and looked at the large woman eagerly.

"I guess that's right!" smiled Mrs. Crawley in a comfortable manner, as she rocked her stout shape to and fro complacently.

There was a pause, while the fire crackled on the hearth, and the sun sparkled in at the frosted window.



"Oh, ma'am, if you please!" she cried tragically. "Will you just look at what I've been ironing?"

There was a red tinge in it now, for the short December day was swinging on its downward orbit.

"Mis' Crawley," ventured Mrs. Baggs, with a deepening spot of pink in each thin old cheek, "you don't think you could—could help me out—about that plum pudding—just in a neighborly way?"

She stuck fast in a bog of hopeless embarrassment.

"Miss-is Baggs," said Mrs. Crawley, sternly and reprovably, "there's neighborliness *and* neighborliness! My plum pudding is, as you may say, a family

matter—a matter of honor. Miss-is Baggs," proceeded Mrs. Crawley, becoming almost oratorical, "my mother—my sainted mother's reputation was in her plum pudding. I will go so far as to say that my mother *was* her plum pudding! I really—do—not—see—how—I—possibly—could—stretch—a—point—not even for you, Miss-is Baggs!"

Before Mrs. Baggs had any opportunity to humble herself in apology, Miggie Bean burst into the room, with a square of white linen faintly smoking in her hands.

"Oh, ma'am, if you please!" she cried

tragically. "Will you just look at what I've been ironing?"

Mrs. Crawley rose in the majesty of two hundred pounds and purple cashmere.

"Miggie Bean," said she, "you've gone and burned my best drawn-work centerpiece!"

"Yes, ma'am," said Miggie simply, stretching the thing out in two convulsive little red hands.

I have said that Miggie was ugly; I have said that she was not attractive; I have even indorsed Mrs. Crawley's description of her as a little, sawed-off, pasty runt, and so on. And I feel that in some obscure way I have been doing Miggie an injustice. I cannot take back flatly any of these terms; yet, in spite of them, I must declare that there were things not wholly unlovable in the little orphan's appearance. She was pasty-pale, perhaps, but that sort of skin is called *mâte* in people who can afford to dress for it. And she was little—absurdly little—and her small features were utterly irregular, and her drab-colored hair was limp and lusterless. And yet—and yet—perhaps we went too far in using the merciless word "ugly." Pretty, of course, she was not; but there was a wistful curve to her thin lips, and her washed-out eyes had at moments so much expression that they made people uncomfortable. And there was a heaven of candor in her look. Dull hair, freckles, thin red wrists, and a paucity of flesh and blood all over, can never make wholly un-beautiful a girl who gives forth such a radiance of divine honesty and purity as little Miggie Bean.

She stood now, looking from the burned cloth to Mrs. Crawley and back again, in a passion of regret, a fervent, disproportioned longing to make it whole again—not to escape punishment, but to right a wrong.

"You may go on with your work," said her employer, controlling herself before Mrs. Baggs. "Of course you will not be paid anything this week. The cloth cost more than your wages, anyhow."

Miggie Bean's white little face grew

no whiter, but it sharpened under the desperate feeling that convulsed her. Hardly seeming to know what she did, she dropped the ruined centerpiece and clasped her hands. Her wide, colorless gray eyes were filled with despairing tears.

"That will do," said Mrs. Crawley sternly. "Go back to your ironing, and see that you don't spoil anything more!"

Pulling herself together, the girl stooped and picked up the cloth and went silently back to the kitchen.

Mrs. Baggs left almost immediately afterward. Like many weak, gentle persons, she disliked the sight of suffering, and she had been made vaguely uncomfortable by being obliged to witness Miggie's evident emotion and Mrs. Crawley's righteous hardness of heart. So, when she passed the kitchen door on her way to her own grounds, the gate of which was back of the Crawley house, she obeyed an idle but kindly impulse, and stopped there to say good night.

Opening the kitchen door a crack, she peered in, and called softly:

"Miggie! Miggie Bean!"

The young girl was sitting huddled, head on arms, and arms on knees, in the middle of a white cyclone of clothes, ironed and unironed. The fire burned red in the kitchen range, and a pot of potatoes, quite unheeded, was boiling over.

Mrs. Baggs was rather shocked and shy before such manifestation of feeling. A New Englander by tradition as well as by birth, she had been trained to consider having emotions at all slightly improper, and giving in to them wholly so. But she was of less strong and fine fiber than most of her sister New Englanders, so she was able to be sorry for the uncontrolled little kitchen maid, and she ventured, very shamefacedly, to say so.

"Dear me, I'm sorry, indeed I am, Miggie Bean. Don't you think, if you sponged it off, maybe, and bleached it, and——"

"No," said Miggie dully, without raising her head. "That sort of thing

don't do any good. And, anyhow, she wouldn't think it did." She looked up suddenly. "Why! It's Mrs. Baggs! 'Scuse me, ma'am! I thought it was myself speaking. I've been saying that sort of thing to myself over and over till I guess I got sort of dazedlike."

"Miggie Bean," said Mrs. Baggs gently but reprovingly, "you know you couldn't think I was yourself—now, could you? But about the centerpiece now—"

"The iron burned it through in one place," said the girl in a final way.

Mrs. Baggs shook her head commiseratingly.

"And Mis' Crawley"—she hesitated—"Mis' Crawley will really expect you to give up all your wages?"

"I s'pose so," said Miggie drearily. "She said so, and she never goes back on a thing, once she's heard herself say it."

Then suddenly it seemed as if the pent-up things in her poor little stormy soul had to come out, helter-skelter, whether she wanted them to or not. She threw out her slim arms in a wild and rebellious gesture, and in the dull red light that glowed through the tiny, half-open door in the front of the range, her small face did not look ugly, but very tragic. The swiftly fading sunshine from the window glinted on the straggling hair. In her dirty clothes, and in that pose of despair, she struck the timid, neat old woman who watched her as a curiously and incomprehensibly impressive little figure. For even to the dull and uninitiate, suffering must ever have a dignity of its own.

"Oh, it ain't fair!" cried Miggie Bean hoarsely. "It's only a centerpiece to her; but it's just my whole life to me!"

She did not care whether Mrs. Baggs could sympathize or not. Her bursting heart had to be heard, and she talked on.

"I shan't be let in the Christmas choir unless I can get a dress to wear. And I was saving up! I was saving up for so long! And this week would have just made it!"

She broke into low sobs.

"And did you want to be in the

Christmas choir so much, Miggie?" asked Mrs. Baggs, not understanding, but pitying her.

"Why, ma'am," said Miggie, in utter, simple pride, "I was to sing 'When shepherds watch' as a solo, and Sam Gibbs—he was to be there—to hear me and—"

She did not blush, but her voice trailed off to a hushed whisper. She was talking of a dream, a dream that was passing into the populous, exquisite, heartbreaking land of might-have-beens.

"Sam," she went on softly, "ain't never seen me, except like this, or some such way. He—he'd never know me in a real white dress, with blue ribbons!"

Mrs. Baggs was herself primitive, and it did not occur to her that there could be devised few costumes that would be less suitable and becoming to poor little Miggie Bean than a white dress with blue ribbons. She thought it quite a proper garb for a young girl, whatever her type, and thought Miggie's disappointment very natural.

It was just as she turned to leave that her own hour of temptation overtook her—black, startling, and insidious.

I have said that Mrs. Baggs was a weak soul among that strong sisterhood who have made New England a watchword for an integrity as true, and about as comforting, as steel. Mrs. Baggs had, until now, been a good and a dutiful woman, but she had never before been tried. She had never before been chairwoman of the Church Improvement Association, and never had her need been so urgent. Some one said once that temptation was the combination of inclination with opportunity. In Mrs. Baggs, the inclination lay dormant; the opportunity she found ready to her grasp, in Miggie Bean.

The old woman's heart beat fast, as, after a furtive look from right to left, she took her fate in both hands, even as Miggie had taken the burned centerpiece half an hour ago.

"Miggie Bean," she said in a husky burst, "you can earn *ten dollars* if you want to!"

The girl sprang to her feet, and stood



"Dear me, I'm sorry, indeed I am, Miggie Bean," she ventured shamefacedly.

and stared at her. Ten dollars! It sounded as impossible to her as the pot of gold to a cynic. Ten dollars would mean wages for a month. Ten dollars would mean slippers and white stockings, and a pink velvet rose for her hair, besides the white dress and blue ribbons. Ten dollars! But ten dollars, of course, were not among the things that could happen.

Then the voice of the elderly tempter

—herself dallying with temptation—continued insinuatingly from the doorway:

"Get me Mis' Crawley's receipt for plum pudding, and I will give you ten dollars!"

Miggie Bean pinched herself to be sure she was not dreaming. Even when the pinches hurt, she felt uncertain of her own hearing. When she had recovered sufficiently to run to the door,

there was no sign of Mrs. Baggs. Yet the words still rang and echoed in a sinister, yet beguiling, fashion through the kitchen:

"Get me Mis' Crawley's receipt for plum pudding, and I will give you ten dollars!"

She went home that night to the asylum in a daze of bewilderment, and even in her sleep the mysterious sentence of temptation sounded in her ears.

I don't think she would have yielded, if she had not chanced, the very next morning, to run into Sam Gibbs at the village store. She had gone there to get some raisins for Mrs. Crawley, who, with her help, was now in the depths of plum pudding for Christmas. And there was Sam, a big, debonair fellow, with a brown skin and a merry eye, chaffing the shopkeeper's daughter over the counter.

Why Sam Gibbs appealed to Miggie's heart is simple enough to understand. He stood for everything romantic, and gay, and attractive, and daring, and *masculine*—which is worth a whole row of other adjectives—in her whole pinched, bleak, starved little life. Of course, she was worth ten of him, but she could not have been expected to see that—and who would want her to? Establish a standard of worthiness, and you annihilate the very breath of romance, which is strongest at taking chances.

"Hello, little un!" called Sam cheerfully across the shop. "They say you sing the carols to beat the band!"

Miggie flushed up becomingly.

"There ain't a-going to be no band; it's a harmonium!" she said, with a shy effort at a smile, and she turned hurriedly to the shopkeeper with what she tried to make a superior and gracious air. The effect must have been marred by a torn petticoat hem dragging about her ankles, but it served to draw Sam Gibbs' attention to the fact that the ankles themselves were slim and shapely. And the color that embarrassment and excitement had driven into Miggie's cheek suggested that at times she might conceivably be not entirely plain.

At all events it was worth a tentative mortgage, and as he passed the girl waiting at the farther counter, Sam leaned close to her, and whispered half jestingly:

"If there's any dancing after the carols on Christmas Eve, save me one, won't you? Any one could tell by your pretty feet you could dance like a breeze!"

After that, of course, Miggie Bean would have committed about any crime in order to have dainty shoes and stockings for the occasion; already it was taking on the glow of gold and of rose that dazzles us only a time or two in a life.

"Yes, maybe you'd better put in some currants, too," she heard herself saying.

In another moment she was speeding back to Mrs. Crawley with the bundle. A new light was in her eyes. I am sure that it burns in those of great criminals who are planning some daring enterprise in which they have judged the prize as well worth the risk.

All that day she worked with Mrs. Crawley, proving so efficient, so helpful, and so quick, that that excellent lady felt more than once inclined to pay her in full the wages that she had deducted because of the spoiled center-piece. However, she did not, and Miggie Bean had, in fact, no hand held out to save her from the downward path! One odd and instructive truth which has been plumed by pretty nearly every woman at one time or another, came home to her just about now—that a woman battling with temptation of any sort never receives any help from man, woman, Providence, chance, or circumstance. The only person who really seems to keep her in mind is the devil.

Late that evening, on her way home to the asylum after her day's work at Mrs. Crawley's, Miggie knocked at the door of Mrs. Baggs.

The various church and charitable societies were officially supposed to fuse for the Christmas festivities. Actually, the wheels within wheels revolved as fast and with as much fric-



Suddenly she lifted her clasped hands to heaven. "Oh, please forgive me, God!" she cried in her high, thin voice.

tion as usual. Petty jealousies and rivalries clouded the clear Yuletide, till the minister prayed for patience, and the matron of the orphan asylum said that it passed belief how sisters in God could act so.

And about the most startling event in the week of jubilation was the serving, at the Christmas Eve supper of the Church Improvement Committee, of a marvelous and succulent plum pudding, made after the one special, secret, almost patented, and altogether sacred recipe of Mrs. Crawley and her sainted mother! And it was Mrs. Baggs, almost light-headed with triumph in her brief authority, who served the dish! A

certain trick of flavoring, a certain mellowness of consistency—there could be no mistaking it, even if it did not come signed from Mrs. Crawley's kitchen. Even if the eaters thereof could have put it down to a felicitous chance, Mrs. Crawley's demeanor would have settled the matter. *She* recognized her plum pudding! *She* knew that pudding like that could be made from no ordinary recipe!

Outraged and yet bewildered, she swept the room for some one upon whom her suspicion and wrath might fall. But she was helpless. If, in her insulted soul, she knew that Mrs. Baggs had stolen her recipe, she had no idea how she could have done so. And so she had to sit helplessly by and listen to people smacking their lips and praising the pudding that Mrs.

Baggs had made!

Mrs. Baggs, through all her elation, was nervous. She was new to the business of being chairwoman, and when she tapped on the table to call the gathering to order, she did so with patent diffidence. After she had finally plucked up sufficient courage, she reminded them that in the town hall that evening the young people were holding a small celebration, with some carols, and a little dancing afterward.

The orphan-asylum people were joining in, and it at least seemed a common ground where all factions could meet for the nonce without hostility. The little hall was soon crowded.

Miggie Bean, in the white dress and blue ribbons, sat in the front row of the semicircle of young girls who were to sing of Noel. She was as white as her dress, and the despair that was in her heart looked out dumbly through her eyes. Her hair was drawn back, parted behind, and wound in tight braids around her head, making her look like a little medieval saint in an ecclesiastical painting. But that she did not know or care about.

"Lord!" said Sam Gibbs, staring up at her as she sat stonily upon the platform, not seeing even him. "If you wanted to forget that little girl, you couldn't!"

The carols began, and slowly, like a person in a trance, Miggie rose and began to sing her solo.

Thin and pure as a treble harp string her girl's voice floated out:

"When shepherds watched their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground,
The angels of the Lord came down——"

She stumbled and faltered in the words. A queer, dazed, frightened expression was dawning in her wide eyes. A little stir of wonder and apprehension began to rise and spread among the other girls grouped behind her on the platform. She tried to recover herself and go on:

"And—glory—glory—shone——"

The school-teacher stopped playing on the harmonium, and turned in surprise. There was a breath of waiting. Miggie Bean stood there, white—ah, far, far whiter than her dress!—swaying like a little, frail flower—or was it only a weed?—in the wind. Suddenly she lifted her clasped hands to heaven.

"Oh, please forgive me, God!" she cried in her high, thin voice. "I have been very, very wicked and dishonest, and all for the sake of a white dress with blue ribbons! But I am not wicked enough to sing a Christmas carol while this is on my soul! I could not sing a Christmas carol—for Thee——"

She sank down, sobbing, just where she stood on the platform. But to

every one's surprise, Sam Gibbs stalked up, and lifted her, and carried her away from the curious eyes that stared and the excited tongues that commented.

And, of course, nobody need even have suspected Mrs. Baggs in the matter, for Miggie never said a word more than that—and *that*, as any one will admit, was under great spiritual pressure. But Mrs. Baggs said soon afterward that she didn't feel well, and went home.

"And," in the words of one of the Colbourne ladies, "most of us knew who had tempted Miggie Bean, and wished we hadn't eaten so much of that dishonest plum pudding!"

As for Miggie, when the mists of a very real fainting fit cleared for her, she found herself in Sam's arms, and with all her heart she wished that she might faint again. But as she could not, she said shakily, but with hasty candor:

"You didn't understand! I cheated! I gave Mrs. Crawley's receipt to another woman, and—and she paid me for it!"

"I guess I understand," said Sam, holding her tight. "And I understand that I've been hunting around for four or five years for a girl who'd be a sport—and honest—and pretty! And I reckon, now I've found her, I'd better hang on to her!"

"But, Sam," she gasped, "why do you think I'm a sport?"

"If you weren't, honey, you wouldn't have taken a chance like you did!"

"And, oh, Sam, I'm not—I'm not—honest!" she whispered brokenly, hiding her eyes against his shoulder. "I let myself be bribed—I——"

"But you told about it!" he cried, lifting up her head. "And you told about it so it wouldn't queer her! And if that's not square——"

"And—Sam"—she could hardly get this out—"as for being *pretty*——"

She was so ashamed and sad that she nearly slipped from his arms in a heap of humility.

"Say," he said merrily, but with a caress in the tone, "I wish you could just see yourself, in your white dress with the blue ribbons!"

And then he kissed her.

Beauty Hints for Cold Weather

By Doctor Lillian Whitney

Dr. Whitney is always glad to answer all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health, but she cannot undertake to answer letters which fail to inclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope for reply, or to letters inclosing Canadian stamps. Every week she receives many letters of this sort, in spite of the notice always printed at the end of this department. Sometimes even, the post office sends notification that letters are being held for her, which careless writers have posted with no stamp. If you have failed to receive a reply to your letter, you may know that it is for one of these three reasons.—EDITORS.

THE seasons roll around with amazing rapidity, and ere we know it lotions and creams for tan and freckles must be replaced by those that will combat Jack Frost's lingering touches here and there. Even when he only sends out his heralds of chilling winds, some protective action against them is necessary before they blight delicate skins or lay a destroying hand upon finger tips, toes, and ear lobes. Yet all of the winter cosmetics are of little avail in preserving the tissues, if internal means are not employed to keep the constitution at the high-water mark. Those of robust habit are impervious, as it were, to biting winds and penetrating cold, but to the less hardy winter is a trying season, and frequently devastating in its rigor.

It is well to begin the day with some form of exercise, and this can be done immediately upon awakening and before arising; bedroom gymnastics have given way to bed gymnastics. Stretch the body out at full length—under the clothing, of course—the arms clasp the sides. Now make the muscles as hard and tense as possible, draw in a full breath—it is supposed that the room is well ventilated—and as this is exhaled, quickly relax. Repeat several times, when it will be found that the heart's action has been increased, and a pleasurable warmth induced by the aug-

mented circulation. Now cast the covers aside, double the fists, and fling the arms widely apart, kick vigorously a few times, and the warmed blood will send a tingling glow into the extremities.

A glass of hot water on arising—to which a dash of lemon juice, or a teaspoon of sodium phosphate, has been added—warms the body and cleanses the stomach for breakfast. A glass of hot milk, sipped slowly, is better for those who are feeble or anæmic; it is, also, an excellent thing for some to take, upon retiring, or just before venturing out into extreme cold, or to heat and sustain the body when it is exposed to zero weather, because milk retains heat much longer than water, and is, besides, an ideal food.

A word regarding winter foods; their selection is of importance because the quality of the blood is dependent upon them, and a warm, healthy body is not possible unless this vital fluid is at its best. Heavy, heat-producing foods are the most sustaining. Of meats, pork heads the list; it is not advised daily, but several times weekly; in the form of bacon with eggs for breakfast it is nourishing and palatable. Beefsteak or roast beef is rich and heating. The fibrous part of meat from which all nutriment has been removed through boiling or stewing is useless.

Starchy vegetables, such as potatoes, beans, lentils, and so forth, are excellent, as are milk, eggs, oily foods, and oils themselves, and hot drinks, especially cocoa and chocolate.

In order to facilitate the digestion of these heavy foods, plenty of stewed fruits should be taken and an abundance of exercise; otherwise the system will be clogged with an excess of useless matter that hampers the processes of nature and invites winter ills instead of preventing them.

Women may not be able to tolerate continued exposure to cold as well as men, but they are injured to the effect of cold to a greater extent, because they wear lighter clothing. The custom of wearing very thin clothes in our superheated houses is capital, if the proper amount of apparel is donned when going out into the air. Women undoubtedly dissipate a great deal of vitality by neglect in this respect. Heat generates heat. Warm clothing and warm food—which means good, rich, red blood—retain bodily heat and shut the cold out.

Exercise in the open air facilitates the combustion of food, promotes the elimination of waste, stimulates the circulation, and induces deeper respiration, thus favoring the oxygenation of blood. Therefore, all forms of winter sports are advised, especially for those of sedentary habit and for girls and women who are inclined to be anæmic. A tonic containing iron may be necessary at first to keep up the bodily tone



Anoint the hands with healing creams.

and warmth until nature's agents have been given time to produce their beneficial effect. When typical winter sports are not available, a good, brisk walk of several miles in the fresh air should form part of the daily routine.

Sauntering or strolling along aimlessly invites cold hands and feet, with the accompanying ills that follow a possible chill. By a good brisk walk is meant a sturdy stride, the pace to be kept up block after block until from three to five miles have been covered. Such a walk is an ideal form of winter exercise; it puts the body in a healthy glow, clarifies the brain, and so gives one a saner insight into life's problems.

With the first wintry days, there is frequently experienced a dryness of the skin, and in many instances an itching, which indicates a lack of oil in the sys-

tem or a sluggish condition of the oil glands. The oil glands are most delicate in structure, and a chilling of the surface of the body inhibits their action. Olive oil, to which a few drops of carbolic acid have been added, rubbed well into the skin, supplies the necessary oil, while the acid allays itching. Olive oil can be taken internally—without, of course, the carbolic acid—to feed the tissues. It is heat-producing, and has been the means of curing chronic sufferers of winter colds.

Soap has a tendency to dry out the skin, and should be used very sparingly in winter, except in cases where there is excessive oiliness. The cleansing meals so often mentioned in these papers should be substitutes for soap, or, if preferred, a cleansing cream can be used. These prevent the tight, dry sensation experienced after using soap and water. Celebrated skin specialists all over the world condemn the use of soap, and the beautiful texture of the skin of those who for years have not allowed soap upon the complexion attests to the value of meals and creams. Many of the prepared meals contain some oil, or a little perfumed castile soap. Directions for treating the complexion have frequently been given elsewhere, and will be sent upon request.

All exposed parts of the body should be rubbed with a protective cream, and lightly powdered to preserve the skin from the cold air. Face powder, when chemically pure, used with a good cream, acts as a beauty mask, and protects the skin from injury; used alone, powder dries out the skin, an effect that the action of cold air enhances.

The superheated air of most American houses has a very deleterious effect upon the skin. Sitting close to a fire, a radiator, or near excessive heat from any source, makes one far more susceptible to the action of cold. Chiffon veils, while protecting the complexion, also render it more sensitive when exposed. Especially is this the case with the lips, made doubly sensitive by the drying effect of the body's heat passing over them and the moisture occasioned by the heat of the veil. This may even

freeze fast to the lips, and so give rise to annoying and irritating chaps and cracks.

A good colorless liquid, to be applied before going out, contains:

Honey	1 ounce
Lemon juice	1 ounce
Eau de Cologne	½ ounce

A healing pomade for use at any time consists of:

Cocoa butter	24 grams
White wax	4 grams
Essence of bergamot	1 gram
Essence of white geranium	1 gram

When lips give unusual trouble in cold weather, it can generally be traced to systemic condition; an undue amount of acidity caused by overloading the system with heavy foods, indigestion, sluggishness of the liver or of the intestinal tract. Of course, it goes without saying that treatment directed to the underlying condition will of itself correct the lip trouble without any local treatment. Information concerning a liver and intestinal stimulant or corrective will be given those who apply for it.

Chapped lips are healed more quickly with spirits of camphor or camphor ice than with creams. The latter are soothing and preventive, but when the lips are actually chapped the drying, astringent action of camphor is more healing. The application of camphor to an open sore will smart for a moment.

Sometimes the lips chap in the same place until an appreciable "crack," extremely painful in nature, results; when healed, it is split open again repeatedly until a chronic condition ensues. Such a condition of the lip may go on to serious trouble, and should receive proper attention. An excellent remedy, and one found to be really beneficial, is salicylated liquid collodion. This should be painted over the crack with a fine camel's-hair brush. It forms a skin impervious to air and moisture, and healing goes on underneath.

Before applying any of the measures mentioned above, the lips should be cleansed with weak boracic-acid water or diluted peroxide of hydrogen. Dry with absorbent cotton, and then apply

the treatment, be it lotion, cream, camphor, or collodion.

The hands require special attention in winter. Carelessness in drying the hands is responsible to a great degree for chapping and cracking. It is necessary that every particle of moisture be removed. Then apply an ointment, or a lotion, and dust with powder. This should always be done before going into the air. A healing pomade, that is also whitening and that can be used under gloves several times too large, and worn during sleeping hours, is the following:

Cocoa butter	1 ounce
Oil of sweet almonds	1 ounce
Oxide of zinc	1 dram
Borax	1 dram
Oil of bergamot	6 drops

For hands that chap and inflame readily, the following combination may be more suitable:

Salol	1 dram
Menthol	$\frac{1}{2}$ dram
Olive oil	1 dram
Lanolin	30 drams

Apply to the hands several times daily.

Workingmen and women, exposed to all kinds of weather, frequently suffer from cracks in the hands, feet, or lips. A preparation given below is quickly soothing and healing:

Prepared suet	1 ounce
Rose ointment	1 ounce
Salicylic acid	30 grains
Sublimed sulphur	30 grains

The suet can be prepared as follows: Melt the fresh suet over a slow fire. While fluid, add from ten to thirty grains of gum camphor to the ounce of suet. After the camphor and suet have been thoroughly mixed, remove from the fire and heat the whole well; and after it has slightly cooled, stir in the other ingredients. This mixture should be spread on the parts and covered with soft linen or bandages.

Chilblains are stubborn, inflammatory conditions of the tissue, far easier to prevent than to cure. Where a tendency or predisposition to them exists, every precaution to ward them off should be taken, because repeated attacks of chilblains in the same situation season after season are apt to result in



Chapped lips require careful treatment.

extremely unfavorable conditions. If the circulation through the parts is healthy, there is little danger; therefore, to keep the blood stirring is of first importance. Exercise, of course, will do this; and proper clothing to keep the parts warm is essential. Those who have thin blood and are susceptible to cold should wear union suits of silk and wool; and inside soles to their shoes, to prevent cold and dampness from penetrating; for the circulation is weakest in the extremities, and the feet are more frequently the seat of frostbites than any other part of the body.

Dancers will know how to manipulate the feet and keep up the circulation. Raising and lowering the body upon the toes is good exercise. When the feet become ice cold they should be treated upon coming indoors. Plunge them into hot, then into cold water; then rub briskly with a turkish towel. A dry salt rub is good; and a turpentine rub, night and morning, stirs up the circulation, creates warmth, and is conducive to better sleep. Feet that are inclined to be cold and damp throughout

the winter should be treated night and morning with equal parts of spirits of rosemary and spirits of turpentine.

When mildly attacked with chilblains, rubbing the parts with cold water or snow is sometimes sufficient to stir up the circulation and restore the parts. *Never go near the fire or heat.*

Friction with oil of turpentine or camphorated vaseline is also good. Homely remedies used by our grandparents, and still good when nothing better is near at hand, are kerosene oil, strong brine, bran water, and so forth.

An excellent liniment, useful when the condition continues, is:

Tincture of cantharides	1 part
Spirits of camphor	1 part
Soap liniment	1 part

To be bound over the troublesome place on bandages.

A salve that gives fine results consists of:

Carbolic acid	1 dram
Tincture of iodine	2 drams
Tannic acid	2 drams
Simple cerate	4 ounces

Sometimes chilblains break and become ulcerated; in such cases they should first be touched with peroxide of hydrogen, then painted with the following lotion and bandaged:

Tincture of iodine	20 grains
Tincture of opium	20 grains
Glycerin	1 ounce

The general care of the ear, from a beauty standpoint, is frequently overlooked; even those of undoubted refinement are often guilty in this respect. Owing to its prominence and its structure, soil is easily accumulated in the ear canal, its folds and crevices. A very bland cleansing cream removes old grime more successfully than soap and water. The ear canal should never be *sopped* with soap suds as is so generally done; this alone may cause deafness by keeping up a mild irritation.

The practice of using a hairpin is not only obnoxious in the sight of others, but pernicious. The secretions of the ear are nature's protective measures

against the entrance of foreign bodies; those who do not irritate the canal by frequent probings are not troubled with an excess of this secretion or ear wax, which hardens upon exposure to the air, and often gives rise to pain and deafness by resting against the eardrum. An ear scoop covered with a fine bit of linen or absorbent cotton, gently inserted into the canal, will usually be sufficient to remove it.

When the wax has become packed in the ear, and causes considerable humming, buzzing, pain, or deafness, it cannot be removed in this simple manner, but must first be softened with warm oil or with peroxide of hydrogen. Many prefer the latter, others get no results from it whatever; it depends upon the character of the wax. When introducing these agents, the head should be thrown back and to the side. A tiny syringe can be employed and the liquid injected without force, or another person can pour it in gently with a teaspoon. The parts should then be closed with a wad of absorbent cotton; after some hours, or the following morning, the cotton should be removed and the canal gently syringed with warm water and glycerin.

In former years, earache, from whatever cause, was treated with hot applications of one kind or another; this is entirely contrary to modern practice, which is to apply cold. The ice bag scatters the inflammatory condition, whereas heat conserves it. Many still maintain that the insertion of medicated cotton into the ear canal protects sensitive ears from undue exposure. Physicians claim that it creates and maintains supersensitiveness, and is bad practice.

For the acute earache, which is sometimes induced by exposure to cold, and which is more or less neuralgic in nature, the following old remedies are always useful: equal parts of olive oil and chloroform, or a mixture of equal parts of laudanum and sweet oil; dropped into the ear and covered with cotton, these afford relief.

Doctor Whitney will be glad to answer, free of charge, all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health. Private replies will be sent to those inclosing a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Do not send Canadian stamps or coins. Address: Beauty Department, SMITH'S MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York.

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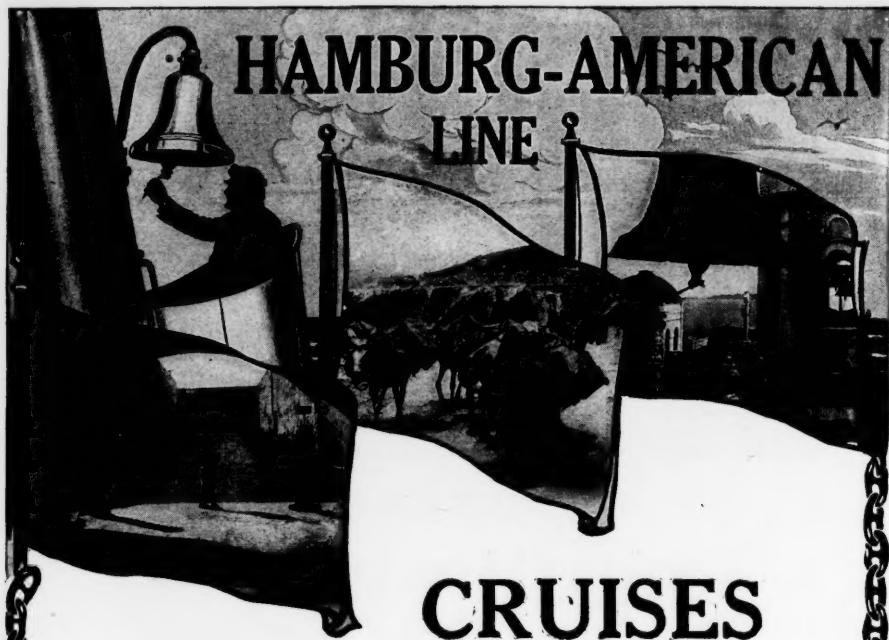
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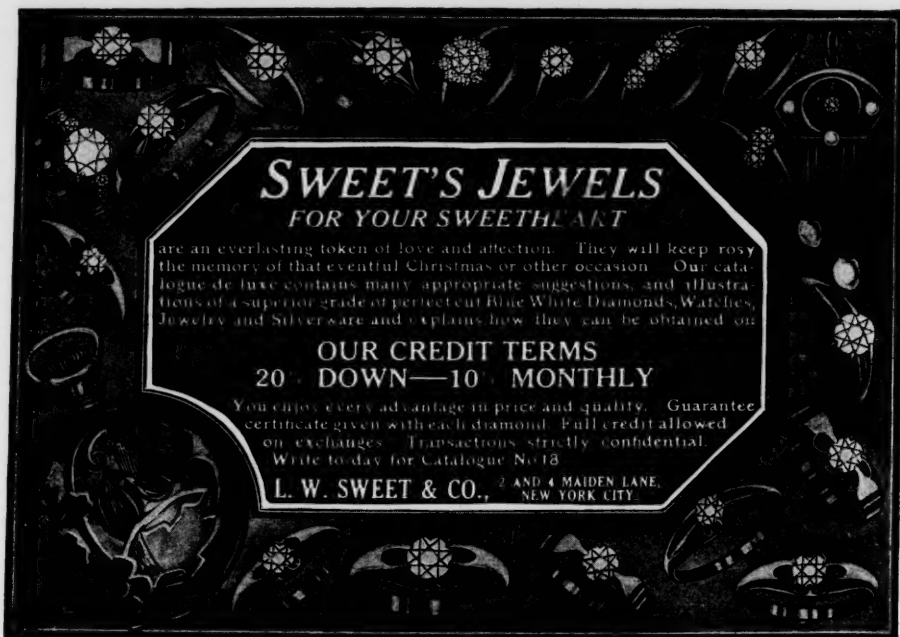
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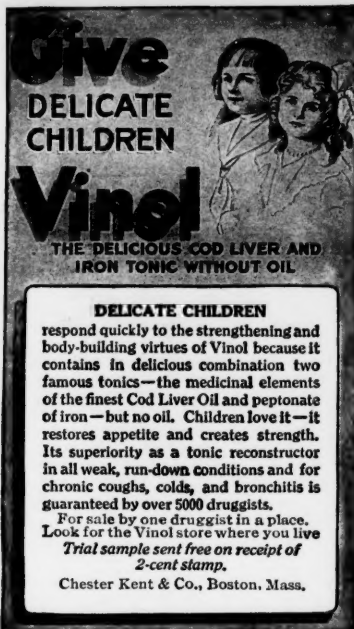
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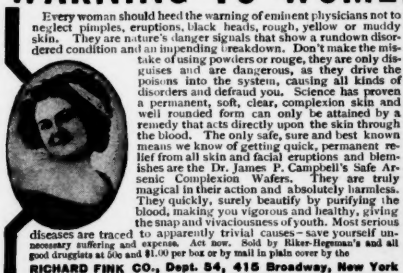


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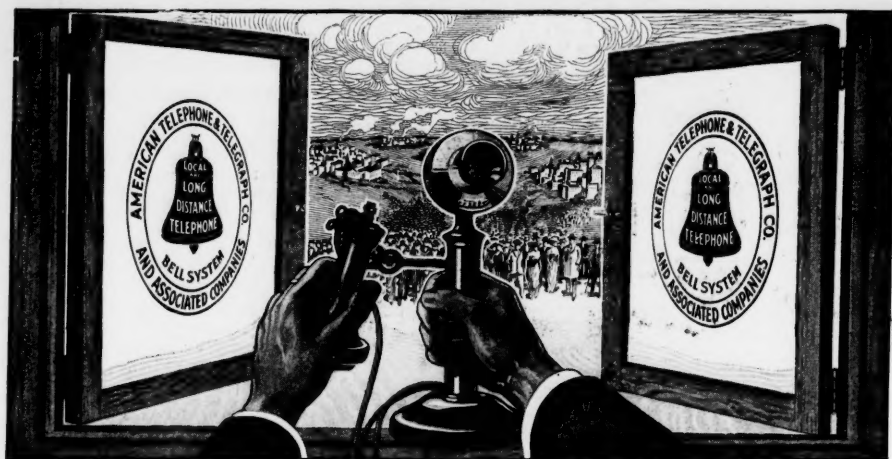


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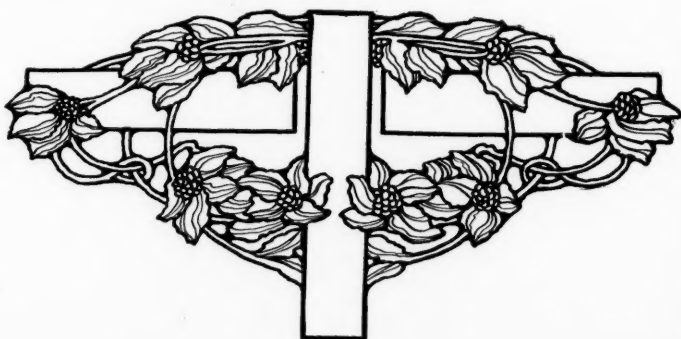
The Unlighted Way

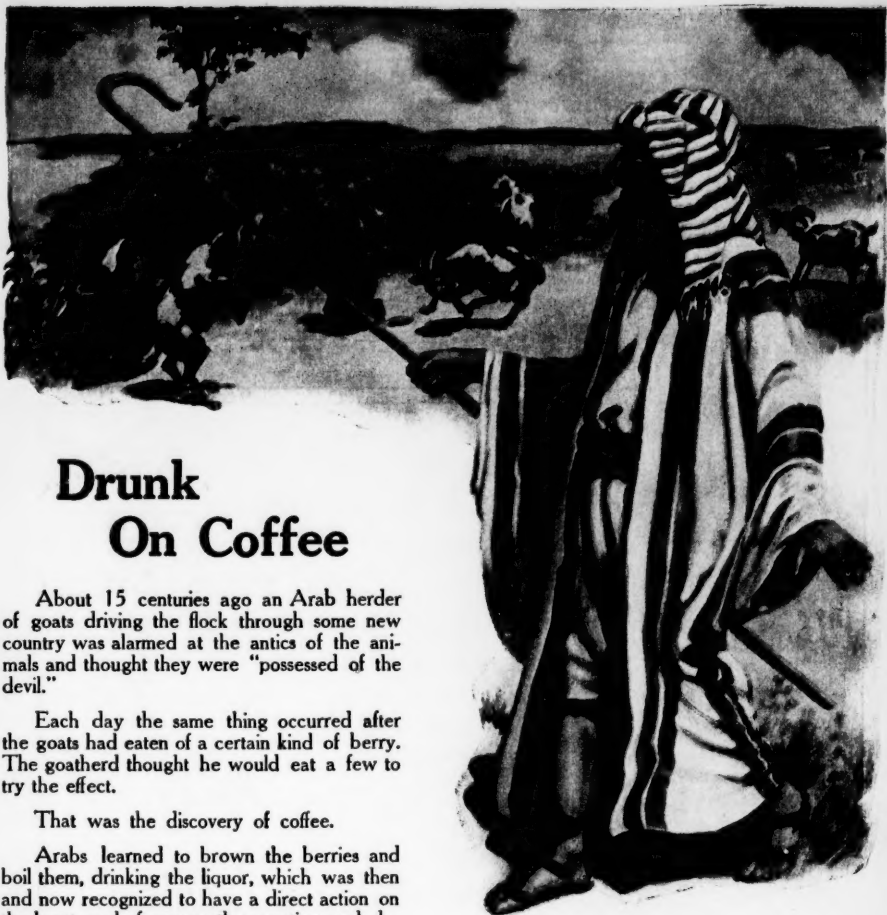
By LEROY SCOTT

Beginning in WOMEN'S STORIES, month-end number for January

The life stories of a man and a woman who are caught and buffeted by the great problems of to-day. A stormy story, of stormy lives, but told with a fire and a conviction of purpose that carry you along on a full tide of interest in the lives of Paul Carlisle and Dinah Hinsdale.

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Drunk On Coffee

About 15 centuries ago an Arab herder of goats driving the flock through some new country was alarmed at the antics of the animals and thought they were "possessed of the devil."

Each day the same thing occurred after the goats had eaten of a certain kind of berry. The goatherd thought he would eat a few to try the effect.

That was the discovery of coffee.

Arabs learned to brown the berries and boil them, drinking the liquor, which was then and now recognized to have a direct action on the heart, and of course the reaction and depression later on.

Coffee sets up a partial congestion of the liver; dulls the brain; wrecks the nerves, and interferes with digestion.

Anyone can easily prove whether it be coffee that causes the periodical headaches, sick stomach, bowel troubles, weak heart, kidney complaint, weak eyes, neuralgia, rheumatism or nervous prostration.

Simply leave it off entirely for ten days and have a rich, piping hot cup of **Postum**.

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Postum now comes in two forms:

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